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the LORD



GOD'S CREATION AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY  
A Catholic Approach to the Environment

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

*Let the Earth Bless the Lord: God's Creation and Our Responsibility* is a parish resource kit of the Domestic and International Policy Committees and part of a special program on environmental justice. It is designed to help parishes respond to the U.S. bishops' pastoral reflection, *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Action and Reflection on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*. This project is part of the plans and programs of the Department of Social Development and World Peace as approved by the bishops in November 1995. *Let the Earth Bless the Lord: God's Creation and Our Responsibility* was approved by the Most Rev. William S. Skylstad, chairman of the Domestic Policy Committee, and is authorized for publication by the undersigned.

**MSGR. DENNIS M. SCHNURR**, General Secretary  
NCCB/USCC

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## CONTRIBUTORS

### Catholic Relief Services

William O'Keefe, Director of Church Outreach  
Thomas Remington, Environmental Technical Advisor

### Environmental Justice Program

Jill Ortman-Fouse, Program Specialist

### Policy Staff of the Office of International Justice and Peace

Barbara Kohnen, International Economics

Kevin James Lee, African Affairs

Gerard F. Powers, Political and Military Affairs

Thomas Quigley, Latin American Affairs

### Department of Social Development and World Peace

Joan Rosenhauer, Consultant

The overall effort was coordinated by Walter E. Grazer, manager of the Environmental Justice Program, under the direction of John Carr, secretary of the USCC Department of Social Development and World Peace and Rev. Drew Christiansen, SJ, director of the Office of International Justice and Peace.

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# Letter from the Bishops

## DEAR PASTOR AND PARISH LEADERS,

In the fall of 1993, the bishops of the United States launched a special effort known as Renewing the Earth: An Environmental Justice Program. Our mission is to help Catholics in the United States begin to see caring for God's creation and addressing environmental concerns as an integral part of faith. As Pope John Paul II emphasized in his statement, *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility*, "Christians in particular realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty toward nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith."

In following Jesus, the Church seeks to live a consistent ethic of life fully reflective of his example of an all-embracing love, particularly for those who are most in need. In striving to protect the dignity of every person and promote the common good of the human family, the Church champions the rights of the unborn, the most vulnerable among us; it endeavors to bring dignity to the poor by helping them become full partners in society; it works to overcome the scourge of racism and bring everyone to the table of the human family; it welcomes the stranger among us; and, in all cases, it promotes the family as the center of human culture and moral development. The Church recognizes that the web of life and the promotion of human dignity are linked to the protection and care of God's creation. It is this integral approach that marks our effort as a distinctively Catholic vision of environmental responsibility.

We are pleased to send you this parish resource, *Let the Earth Bless the Lord: God's Creation and Our Responsibility*, which offers practical tools to help parishes act on this "essential part of their faith" by promoting environmental justice. This resource focuses on integrating environmental justice into ongoing parish ministries. Its elements are intended to be copied and distributed to appropriate parish staff and leaders.

This particular parish resource, *Let the Earth Bless the Lord: God's Creation and Our Responsibility*, is the third in a series of educational materials for parishes. The first two resources sought to root environmental concerns deeply within the Catholic tradition. Both resources contain helpful homiletic ideas, liturgical suggestions, and prayer services for pastors and liturgical committees as well as timely articles on related topics. Both are available from the United States Catholic Conference.

*Let the Earth Bless the Lord* seeks to convey two messages. First, let us celebrate what Catholics all across this great nation of ours are doing to care for God's creation and let us follow their example. This resource highlights a wide variety of models being carried out by Catholic parishes and organizations. Second, many environmental problems are international in scope, and we are a universal Church. The articles in this resource emphasize the international dimensions of environmental concerns while highlighting the Church's teachings and practical efforts to protect the environment on an international scale. Similar to prior parish resource kits, prayer and homily suggestions are included.

We are very conscious of the many demands made upon parishes. They serve as the center of our shared life in faith. This is why we seek to integrate environmental concerns into ongoing parish programs. Our environment is not something "out there." It is the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land we live on and depend on. It is about everyday social justice, economic resource use, public health, and family and community concerns. We offer these resources and others, not as mandates, but as vehicles for helping parishes. We are grateful to the many pastors and parishioners who over these last several years have responded to Pope John Paul II's reminder that "respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation."

We want to celebrate the hard and creative work of so many Catholic dioceses, parishes, and individuals who address environmental concerns. We also want to acknowledge the fine environmental efforts of the bishops' anti-poverty program, the Campaign for Human Development; the bishop's overseas relief and development agency, Catholic Relief Services; and the partnership of the National Council of Catholic Women and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. We are also grateful for the essential interfaith collaboration made possible through our membership in the National Religious Partnership for the Environment.

We hope these materials are helpful to you in your endeavors. We are ready to assist you in any way we can, and thank you for all that you do to be faithful stewards of the "Lord's Earth."

Sincerely,



**MOST REV. THEODORE E. McCARRICK**  
Chairman, International Policy Committee



**MOST REV. WILLIAM S. SKYLSTAD**  
Chairman, Domestic Policy Committee



## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

This resource is designed to assist the entire parish. Therefore, we suggest that pastors copy and distribute each section to the appropriate lay leaders or staff. We also suggest that it be used in conjunction with the USCC Environmental Justice Program's other parish kits, videos, and books, which

offer additional ideas and resources. (See the back cover for ordering information.)

Below are brief descriptions and ideas for distribution for each section. For questions or more information on anything contained in this resource, please call the USCC Environmental Justice Program at (202) 541-3160.

SECTION	DESCRIPTION	DISTRIBUTE THIS SECTION TO
St. Francis Recognition of Model Parishes (see inside back cover)	Complete and return this form describing your environmental efforts to receive a certificate as a "St. Francis Parish"	Your pastor, secretary or social concerns leader/staff—anyone who can complete the form
How to Get Started	A few simple suggestions for starting a parish environmental justice committee	Your pastor, parish council president, your social concerns leader/staff— whoever might help start a committee
Celebrating the Past—Moving to the Future: Parish Models of Environmental Justice	Examples of environmental activities in parishes across the country to offer ideas and spark new parish initiatives	Your pastor, social concerns leader/staff, director of religious education, school principal, youth minister
Homily Help: Preaching God's Environment	Suggestions for weaving environmental justice and respect for creation into homilies	Homilists
Prayer Services for Use on Special Occasions	A selection of prayers related to creation and the environment, including several that are suitable for interfaith settings	Your pastor, parish staff, liturgy committee, parish council, committees, school principal, small groups, social concerns leaders, and others
The International Connection	A series of articles on international environmental issues, along with discussion questions for small groups	Your pastor, director of religious education, social concerns leader/staff, Renew groups, other small groups
Practical Ways to Make the International Connection Work for You	Simple yet effective ideas for acting on international environmental justice in your parish	Your pastor, director of religious education, social concerns leader/staff, parish council— anyone interested in organizing a parish international environmental initiative
Parish Clip Art	Logos and other graphics that can be "cut and pasted" for bulletins, handouts, etc.	Your pastor, parish secretary, and others who prepare printed materials
Bulletin Quotes	Quotes from the new <i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> on the topic of environmental justice that can be used in homilies, bulletins, handouts, speeches, etc.	Your pastor, parish secretary, other staff, and appropriate leaders
The USCC Environmental Justice Small Grants Program	Detailed information on how to apply for one-year small grants for support of new diocesan and parish initiatives	Your pastor or social concerns leader/staff—anyone who wishes to apply
Additional Resources for Seeking Environmental Justice	Organizations, print materials, and videos to support your environmental justice initiative	Your parish staff and appropriate leaders

## HOW TO GET STARTED

Before launching or strengthening a parish environmental justice initiative, it is important to consider how the effort will fit into your parish. As the bishops have stated in their document on the social mission of the parish, *Communities of Salt and Light*, the best parish social ministry efforts will be central to parish life and will be integrated into ongoing parish ministries. Environmental justice is no exception. So the first question to ask is, How can we best integrate environmental justice into the life of our parish?

Clearly, an important place to start is with your pastor and parish council. To place the idea in a broader context, present your suggestion for a parish environmental justice program with a brief overview of Church teaching on the topic and an explanation of the bishops' national program. (The videos produced by the USCC Environmental Justice Program [see p. 32 and back cover] provide an excellent overview.) You can then solicit ideas and suggestions. You may want to suggest forming a parish committee to develop a specific plan for environmental ministry.

## Forming a Committee

Many parishes across the country have social concerns committees or are forming environmental justice committees that involve a number of people in planning and implementing the parish environmental justice program. If you decide to form a committee, you'll want to be strategic about how you invite people to join. In addition to general invitations in the bulletin, think about specific people you'd like to involve. For example, if you want environmental justice incorporated into the parish religious education program, the director of religious education or the director's designee would be a valuable member. If certain clubs or groups are particularly popular in the parish, having representatives from those groups will help spread the message about the parish's environmental justice program.

Once your committee is formed, be clear about its purpose. Too many parish committees fall into the habit of trying to do the work themselves, instead of encouraging others to get involved. The best environmental justice committees focus on planning parish initiatives that provide opportunities for many parishioners to participate.

## Developing a Plan

There are several things you'll want to consider as you develop your parish environmental justice plan.

- **What are the unique environmental concerns in your community?** If you live in an urban area, the issues you'll address will be different from those in a rural area. You may want to conduct a survey in your parish to identify concerns or contact local environmental groups to learn about local issues.
- **What resources do you have?** Will your committee have a budget for copying and mailing? How large is the committee? If you begin with a small membership and budget, you'll want to limit your plans.
- **Who are your allies?** Diocesan staff in such offices as peace and justice, education, pro life, and others can provide valuable resources and support for your efforts. Local environmental and interfaith groups can help identify local environmental issues. They may have existing environmental programs you can join, and it is likely they will support projects you initiate.
- **What is realistic?** As you develop your plan, remember that there is nothing wrong with starting small. Being realistic and running a project well will lay a strong foundation for future environmental justice initiatives. Even something as simple as regular quotes in the parish bulletin can educate parishioners who might not otherwise think about the connection between our faith and the environment.
- **Into what areas of parish ministry would you like to incorporate environmental justice?** The best parish environmental justice programs will connect environmental concerns to various parish ministries. The following sections of this resource offer models and suggestions for integrating these concerns into all aspects of parish life.

Additional suggestions for developing a parish environmental justice initiative can be found in pages 4-10 of this booklet, as well as in the USCC Environmental Justice Program's parish resource kit, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation* (Pub. No. 032-X). Copies can be purchased by calling (800) 235-8722.

# Celebrating the Past—Moving to the Future

## Parish Models of Environmental Justice

**U**seful ideas for integrating environmental justice into parish life can be found in the outstanding environmental justice projects that are being undertaken in parishes across the country. Since 1993, the U.S. Catholic bishops' Environmental Justice Program has encouraged and supported hundreds of creative environmental efforts in Catholic schools, parishes, and organizations. In the Catholic community, there is growing recognition that protecting human life and dignity cannot be separated from the protection of all creation. At all levels, Catholics are responding to the bishops' challenge: *We ask the members of our Church to examine our life-styles, behaviors, and policies—individually and institutionally—to see how we contribute to the destruction or neglect of the environment and how we might assist in its protection and restoration.*—Renewing the Earth

In this kit, we want to share some of the environmental initiatives being undertaken by Catholics across the country so these efforts can spark even greater creativity and serve as models for others who want to make environmental justice an integral part of the life of the Church. If you would like information on any of the programs described here, contact the USCC Environmental Justice Program at (202) 541-3160.

The following models are organized using the framework in the U.S. bishops' statement, *Communities of Salt and Light*, which suggests that the best social ministry programs are those that are integrated into all aspects of parish life, rather than being add-ons or optional efforts. The models provide examples of environmental justice projects in education; youth ministry; family, work, and citizenship; outreach and charity; advocacy; community organizing; and international affairs. They are followed by a set of homily notes and suggestions for incorporating the theme of environmental justice into prayer and worship.

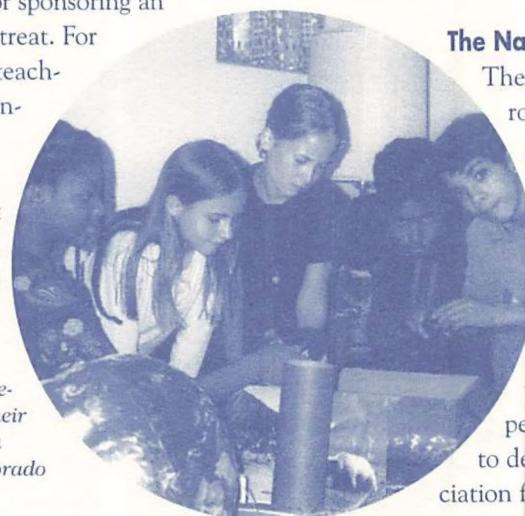
### EDUCATION

**E**ducation ministries provide some of the most important opportunities for incorporating Church teaching on the environment into parish life. If our schools and educational programs do not address environmental concerns, they will never become an integral part of parishioners' lives. Incorporating environmental justice into your parish's education programs can be as simple as devoting one religious education or elementary school class period to the topic, or as elaborate as setting up a new curriculum or sponsoring an environmental retreat. For schools, Church teaching on the environment offers an excellent opportunity to connect science curricula with faith formation.

*Denver students prepare to exchange their Bioboxes with sixth graders on the Colorado Plains.*

### EXAMPLES

**The BioBox Project** Sixth-grade students in the Archdiocese of Denver's Catholic inner-city elementary schools are creating "BioBoxes" containing artifacts and information reflecting the students' environmental region. They will exchange the boxes with sixth-graders from other regions. Through this process, the students will learn about the uniqueness of their region, the sacredness of creation, and the value of networking to promote environmental awareness.



### The Nature Classroom

The Nature Classroom project in the Diocese of St. Augustine, Fla., involves Catholic elementary school students in a variety of experiences designed to develop an appreciation for the inter-

dependence of humans and the environment. The students are involved in classroom and field plant identification, plant dying and weaving, and creation of an herbarium. They also reflect on Catholic social teaching and our responsibility to protect the wonders of creation. The project's coordinators are developing easy-to-use lesson plans, a training program, and a video for instructors.

#### Cycle of Life Project

Through the Cycle of Life Project, students at St. Mary's School in the diocese of Knoxville, Tenn., are learning the value of organic gardening by setting up a compost system for growing plants to beautify areas around the school. "Grow labs" will also be set up so the children can measure differences between plants fed by compost and those without compost. Vegetables from the grow labs will be donated to food pantries. The children are learning not only the value of sustainable agriculture and beautifying their environment, but are also learning the importance of avoiding waste by sharing our excess with those in need.

*“We invite teachers and educators to emphasize in their classrooms and curricula, a love for God’s creation, a respect for nature, and a commitment to practices and behavior that bring these attitudes into the daily lives of their students and themselves. ”*

#### RENEWING THE EARTH

Local newspapers, including the diocesan newspaper, have agreed to publicize the project.

#### Environmental Retreat

Freshmen and sophomores at Holy Rosary Academy in the Archdiocese of Louisville, Ky., attended an environmental retreat where they reflected on what it means to respect God's creation and to work for environmental justice. After the retreat, the students initiated gardening and recycling

projects that helped them act on their reflections.

#### Stewardship through the Seasons

Parishioners of St. James Cathedral in Seattle, Wash., wanted to provide opportunities for both reflection and action on the connection between faith and the environment. First, they distributed quarterly bulletin flyers on environmental issues and Catholic teaching to encourage reflection and discussion. Then, they offered opportunities to participate in various environmental activities, including farming trips and a weekend wilderness retreat.

## YOUTH MINISTRY

Young people often instinctively know that they have a stake in protecting the future of God's creation, and they love hands-on opportunities to act on environmental concerns. Initiatives as simple as an afternoon cleanup at a nearby

vacant lot or stream, as well as more elaborate programs such as those described on the next pages, can capture the imagination of your parish youth group and help them learn to be responsible stewards of the environment.

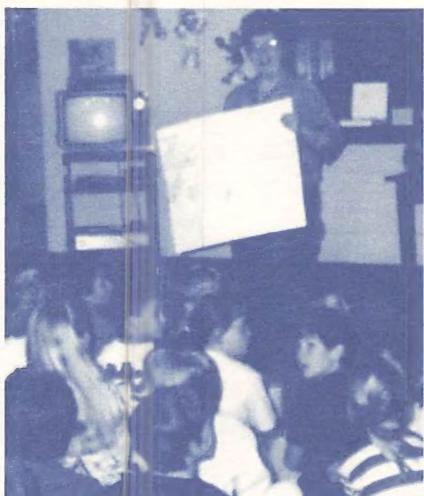


## EXAMPLES

### De La Roca Saldrá Agua, Community Garden Project

The youth group of St. Mary's Parish in Bridgeport, Conn., reacted to the violence and decay in their inner-city neighborhood by taking an abandoned, garbage-strewn, city-owned lot and turning it into a community garden where they help their elderly neighbors maintain plots. Recently, through the cooperation of the local water company and a grant from the USCC Environmental Justice Program, the group helped install a water spigot at the site. Now the elderly gardeners can water their vegetables without hauling water, a dangerous task during the summer heat.

**Millennium Garden** The Millennium Garden, a project of the Holy Family Catholic Educational Center in San Jose, Calif., provides young people with hands-on gardening experience to develop their understanding of our responsibility for caring for the earth. The program includes working with native plants, planting a butterfly garden, growing plants in a greenhouse, and cultivating a vegetable garden.



Volunteer retired teacher Jean Kolmes teaches environmental awareness at a Winona County school as part of the Environmental Eagles.

*“As individuals, as institutions, as a people, we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for our children and for generations yet unborn.”*

### RENEWING THE EARTH

A composting project and a weather station round out the program, which serves more than 600 young people annually.

**Environmental Eagles** The Winona, Minn., Area Council of Catholic Women started an Environmental Eagles Club for seventh graders who

work on local environmental issues and raise community awareness. Their first project was developing an environmental ecology calendar. Each member was responsible for researching environmental and ecological characteristics associated with one month of the year. The children used that information to create calendar pages.

**Prairiewoods** At the Prairiewoods Spirituality Center run by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Dubuque, Iowa, junior high students are taught to develop favorable habitats for wildlife. They spend one week observing the wildlife and recording their observations. The project is designed to teach appreciation of nature, promote an understanding of Church teaching, and preserve space for wildlife in an urban area.

## FAMILY, WORK, & CITIZENSHIP

**A**s the bishops suggest in *Communities of Salt and Light*, “[O]ur parishes need to encourage, support, and sustain lay people in living their faith in the family, neighborhood, marketplace, and public arena. . . .” In addition to providing environmental education and action opportunities, parishes and pastors can encourage members to make environmentally responsible decisions by example, managing parish resources and facilities in an environmentally sensitive manner.

## EXAMPLES

**Parish Environmental Initiative** Mary Help of Christians Parish near Miami has produced 5,000 brochures describing its building program. The brochures explain how the program was ecologically in harmony with the

land; produced appropriate liturgical, spiritual, and ecological results; and was economically sound. Their goal is to provide ideas and templates for other dioceses and parishes.

*“We remind parents that they are the first and principal teachers of children. . . . It is at home that they develop the habits of self-control, concern, and care that lie at the heart of environmental morality.”*

### RENEWING THE EARTH

**Despiertate** The Despiertate Project in Baker, Ore., offers agricultural workers an opportunity to reflect on their responsibility to protect themselves and the integrity of creation from dangerous chemicals in their environment. The program includes written and video information on pesticides and other chemicals, a discussion session, training on how to address issues, and opportunities for prayer and reflection.

*“We ask business leaders and representatives of workers to make the protection of our common environment a central concern in their activities and to collaborate for the common good and the protection of the earth.”*

#### RENEWING THE EARTH

#### Cooperative Recycling Project

Parishes in the Diocese of Owensboro, Ky., are cooperating to recycle their seasonal missalettes. The project provides work for a formerly unemployed person and a college student, who are implementing the project. All funds generated from the effort will be used for future environmental projects.

**Earth Passion** The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet are working with St. Anastasia, Visitation, and St. Joseph's Parishes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles to offer a range of discussion sessions, videos, and other materials to help parishioners become aware of ways they can be more environmen-

tally just in their lifestyles. The program's topics include Church teaching, the spirituality of justice, organic gardening, and sustainable living.



Andrew Rudin of the Interfaith Coalition on Energy tests a boiler in a Philadelphia basement.

includes the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, has prepared workbooks to help parish leaders (pastors, youth groups, and others) to conduct an energy audit and implement cost-effective, energy-efficient practices.

#### Interfaith Coalition on Energy

The Interfaith Coalition on Energy, which

## OUTREACH & CHARITY

**O**utreach and charitable projects can provide opportunities to focus on the “justice” dimension of “environmental justice.” Too often, the most vulnerable people in our culture are also most victimized by its failures. Particularly in the case of environmental health hazards, the poor, the sick, and the unborn are often severely affected.

Across the country, parishes, schools, and other Catholic organizations are finding innovative ways to connect concern for the environment with concern for the poor and vulnerable. They’re improving the physical condition of poor neighborhoods, providing health education, establishing gardening projects for low-income communities, and, in many other ways, addressing environmental threats to those most in need.

#### EXAMPLES

**Jobs for the Environment** Parishes in the Archdiocese of Seattle, along with the Archdiocesan Communications Office and the Coalition for a Livable Washington, are working together to

publicize Jobs for the Environment. The program is a highly successful effort to create environmentally sound jobs in distressed communities that have been torn apart by conflicts between those who want to protect the ancient Pacific Northwest forests and those who want to protect the quality of life in communities that depend on the timber industry. The program’s latest initiative is a video that tells the story of Jobs for the Environment. The video is designed to be used as an educational tool in parishes and with other groups.

#### Plant a Row for Neighbors in Need

Parishes in the Diocese of Portland, Maine, are using parish lands and encouraging parishioners to use their yards to grow fresh produce that will be donated to local soup kitchens. Each parish in the diocese received an educational kit including seeds and ideas for their use. The project was spearheaded by the diocesan Office of Social Justice and Peace. It is designed to help parishioners deepen their understanding of Catholic teaching on

During the two-day forum

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the development of contami-

nated properties in low-income and

minority communities.

### Outreach & Charity, continued

the environment and stewardship of the land, as well as on charity and feeding the hungry.

**The Brownfield Initiative** In the Diocese of Indianapolis, Focolare, a Catholic ecclesial organization, has developed a project in response to the

*“The ecological problem is intimately connected to justice for the poor. . . . The option for the poor embedded in the Gospel and the Church’s teaching makes us aware that the poor suffer most directly from environmental decline and have the least access to relief from their suffering.”*

RENEWING THE EARTH



U.S. Environmental

Protection

Agency’s

brownfield

program.

The EPA

offers

grants to

encourage

businesses

to develop

contaminated

commercial and

industrial sites, or

“brownfields.”

In most cases, these sites are in low-income urban communities. The Brownfield Initiative will consist of four community meetings to educate, encourage, and

enable low-income residents to be informed participants in any efforts to develop “brownfield” sites in their communities.

**Hope Takes Root** Parishes in two impoverished Detroit neighborhoods developed a project to connect residents to their environment and to the land. They organized the cleanup and greening of twenty abandoned lots with more than fifty helpers. More than twenty households participate in their community gardening project, and more than one hundred people attended meetings on composting and recycling. Parishes will hold training and follow-up sessions focusing on Catholic social teaching.

## LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

**T**he policies of government and industry can do a great deal to protect or harm the environment, to pursue or ignore the common good, and to promote or diminish justice. Our faith calls us to bring our values to the debate about environmental policy and to make our voices heard in defense of all creation, particularly the poor and vulnerable. Across the country, parishes and dioceses are advocating for environmental justice through their legislative networks and are joining other local groups to educate and activate their parishioners to work for socially and economically sound environmental policies.

### EXAMPLES

#### **Southwest Environmental Equity**

**Project (SWEET)** The Office of Peace and Justice of the Diocese of Phoenix is organizing a Catholic environmental advocacy campaign to participate in forming state environmental policies. The project aims to involve 500 people in education sessions in four parishes.

The sessions will include reflection on the spirituality of creation and its relationship to the environmental decisions being made by the state legislature. Participants will also visit Nogales, Ariz., a predominantly Latino border community, where they will learn about the connection between industrial pollution and high rates of cancer and lupus. Finally, participants will testify before the legislature and advocate through letters and phone calls for environmentally sound and just policies.

**Diocesan Land Use Task Force** The Diocese of Cleveland has formed a Diocesan Land Use Task Force to look at the implications of regional sprawl for the environment, racial justice, and economic development. The task force will explore the moral dimensions of urban sprawl, connecting it to questions of justice and stewardship. They will then develop a framework for evaluating public policy and promoting a more just, economically sound, and environmentally safe region.

*“We urge policy makers and public officials to focus more directly on the ethical dimensions of environmental policy and on its relation to development, to seek the common good, and to resist short-term pressures in order to meet our long-term responsibility to future generations. . . . We need to use our voices and votes to shape a nation more committed to the universal common good and an ethic of environmental solidarity.”*

#### RENEWING THE EARTH

**Holy Spirit Catholic Community** Holy Spirit is a small but active parish in Pennington Gap, Va., located in the state's poorest county. Several years ago the county was targeted for a new waste facility. Believing that their community had sustained enough environmental damage from strip mining, members of Holy Spirit rallied to oppose the waste facility. They attended hearings, signed petitions, wrote letters, and protested at the courthouse. They learned a great deal about environmental issues and went on to develop an “earth-friendly” design for their new building.

**Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana** The Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, La., and other local religious organizations have become deeply involved in environmental

issues in response to the destruction of wetlands. Local fishermen have been fenced out of traditional fishing waters by new levees, and increased development has destroyed the natural processes which once protected homes against floods caused by storms and hurricanes. Church leaders were instrumental in forming the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana to engage people in advocacy and educational efforts. More than 4,000 people have been involved in the project.

#### St. Raphael's Environmental Advocacy

**Advocacy** Reflecting their parish's environmental mission statement, the environmental justice committee of St. Raphael's Parish in Rockville, Md., acts to promote education, action, and spiritual growth. Many parishioners are active in the Eco-Civic Network, which supports the policy of “reduce, reuse, and recycle,” and have resisted a mass-burn incinerator through court hearings, petitions, and demonstrations. The environmental justice committee has also initiated parish membership in Bread for the World to track state and national legislation on hunger issues and foreign aid. They share this information with the parish community for letter writing and telephone campaigns.

#### Sts. Peter and Paul Legislative Advocacy

Environmental issues, especially those related to clean air and water, are among the three or four priority legislative issues chosen each year by members of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Williamsville, N.Y. Parishioners research relevant state and federal legislation and then ask all committees that meet and respond. Information is distributed to committee leaders, who present the issues to their groups, facilitate discussion, and distribute postcards that are collected and mailed to targeted legislators.



St. Raphael's Parish in Rockville, Md., joined Bread for the World through the encouragement of the parish's environmental justice committee, the Earth Community, to build awareness of the global relationships between hunger, poverty, and the environment.

## ORGANIZING FOR JUSTICE

**A**cross the country, Catholic parishes are joining other organizations and churches to form grassroots community organizations that address a wide range of local issues, including environmental justice. Often with funding from the Campaign for Human Development (CHD), these organizations give parish leaders an opportunity to identify their concerns, develop

leadership skills, and use the power of numbers to shape local and state decision-making.

#### EXAMPLES

**Mothers of East L.A.** Women from Resurrection Parish in East Los Angeles have joined with other mothers in the community to form Mothers of East L.A. Together, the women have successfully opposed a

## Organizing for Justice, continued

**“As citizens, each of us needs to participate in this debate over how our nation best protects our ecological heritage, limits pollution, allocates environmental costs, and plans for the future. ”**

### RENEWING THE EARTH

hazardous waste incinerator proposed for a site near their community. They also defeated a proposal by Chem Clear, a subsidiary of Union Pacific Corporation, to build a plant near a local high school. The company planned to clean toxic chemicals out of paint and other substances and then transport the toxins through the neighborhood to be buried nearby. An important part of the mothers' strategy is to participate in prayer vigils as a means of connecting their organizing tactics (testifying at hearings and meeting with company officials) with their faith.

### Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization

The Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization in is a multi-issue, church-based community in Wisconsin. Member churches have worked together on a variety of issues, including an effort to get a local chemical plant to acknowledge its corporate responsibility to the community and the plant's workers.

**Lower Anthracite Project** The Lower Anthracite Project (LAP) is a regional coalition of churches, unions, business groups, and community organizations that work together for economic

justice and environmental preservation in the hard-coal fields of Northeastern Pennsylvania. The group believes it is possible to protect both jobs and

the environment. They stopped a major plant closing while maintaining their commitment to preserve the environment.

## BUILDING SOLIDARITY: BEYOND PARISH BOUNDARIES

**O**ur faith calls us to see ourselves as members of a universal church, tied to our brothers and sisters around the world as one family in Christ. Yet many parishes find the international connection among the most challenging aspects of social ministry. With problems so great and so distant, it's often difficult for parishioners to see how they can make a difference. As a result, international concerns are the last to be addressed. But this doesn't have to be the case. A list of simple yet effective opportunities for parish involvement in international environmental justice can be found on pages 31-32. Below are examples of parishes that are already working for sustainable development and environmental protection in other lands.

### EXAMPLES

**Seeds of Hope** The Church of St. Anne in Fair Lawn, N.J., has incorporated international concerns into its environmental justice program through its education ministry and through a Seed/Pen Pal exchange program. In addition to studying local environmental concerns, the parish school, adult education, and confirmation preparation programs include speakers and materials on global ecological concerns. The parish sent seed packets to African missions to help promote sustainable agriculture. Parishioners are now establishing pen pals and other exchanges with African missionary communities.

**“Ecological concern has now heightened our awareness of just how interdependent our world is. Some of the gravest environmental problems are clearly global. In this shrinking world, everyone is affected and everyone is responsible. . . .**

**The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental ethic. ”**

### RENEWING THE EARTH

**International Trade Project** The St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, Ore., has developed a trading project that combines assistance to a developing community with a recycling program in Lane County. The Society established a St. Vincent de Paul store in Belize City, Belize, and ships items there that would otherwise be discarded and sent to a local landfill. Lane County members have shipped clothing, office equipment, refrigerators, and books donated by local businesses, hospitals, churches, and individuals.

# Homily Help: Preaching God's Environment

by Rev. Raymond B. Kemp

For most Catholics, the Sunday Eucharist is where they not only celebrate the central truth of their faith and belief in God, but also the primary time and place where they learn about their faith. Homilies are therefore critical to faith formation. Fr. Raymond Kemp has spent many years working with priests and seminarians helping them minister better to the people they serve. He works with Fr. Walter Burghardt, SJ, in helping priests become better homilists through the Preaching the Just Word project. In this homily, Fr. Kemp provides a personal insight into why he has not preached more about environmental concerns as a matter of faith and how priests can perhaps approach preaching about caring for God's creation.

**E**xamining papal teaching on ecology and the environment and the Sunday readings, I had to ask myself why I so rarely preach about our relationship to the environment. Pope John Paul II clearly teaches that our relationship with the environment is a moral question at the same level as our relationship with God, with one another, and with other created things that it should receive at least some preaching attention. My reflections led me to conclude that my moralisms are still directed to individuals and their choices. The state of the world's natural resources appears to be in the hands of corporations and government agencies, and I am not preaching in the Amazon basin or on Wall Street. So, except for the occasional reference to litter, what's the use?

I have listened to more than 1,500 preachers during the last four years, as I have traveled with Fr. Walter Burghardt, SJ, in our *Preaching the Just Word* retreats and workshops. On each retreat, we asked our preachers to list the justice issues that concerned them, and on only one in forty-five retreats were environmental concerns not mentioned. As we explored their concerns, we invariably found that ecology is related to economics, the abuse of cheap and migratory labor, and maximizing profits without considering the human or ecological effects. From massive hog pens in Iowa that exploit cheap labor and ruin the land and the waterways (but put cheap bacon in our supermarkets) to the checkerboard effect created by the indiscriminate harvest of timber, from unsafe rivers and streams to rat-infested city slums, it is clear that one does not have to be a citizen of Chernobyl to be concerned about the environmental crisis.

But how can we preach about it effectively? With the help of Fr. John Donahue, SJ, and other Scripture scholars, we are defining biblical justice as right relationships with God, our neighbor, and the whole of creation. These right relationships are embodied in Christ and in God's covenants with Israel, and securing these right relationships is an essential element of the mission of those who seek the kingdom of God. Sin is the sundering of those relationships, the separation of us from one another, our God, and creation. Whatever destroys these relationships is to be avoided. We seek only to deepen those relationships individually and



We at Woodstock are very interested in how you are preaching these issues because we want to share approaches in our newsletter and on the web. Contact us at the Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057, (202) 687-4223, or at [kempr@gusun.georgetown.edu](mailto:kempr@gusun.georgetown.edu). You can find us on the Internet at <http://guweb.georgetown.edu/woodstock>

collectively. When was the last time you saw a highway sign proclaiming that a parish had claimed responsibility for maintaining a clean roadway?

Once we establish its theological and scriptural underpinnings, it is fascinating to note how often Jesus uses nature as an example of true godliness, with phrases like the sower went out to sow, the wheat and the chaff will be gathered together, play out your nets for a catch, a storm came up quickly, and so on. Look to the Hebrew covenant, to the good of all creation and the harmony in the garden, to the hymnal which is the psalter, to the prophetic allusions rich in the images of nature and to the songs we sing in worship—the whole of creation praises its Creator and reflects God's power.

The ruin that we who steward creation have wrought is evil, and the effects of our evildoing surround us. But we are like fish who never notice the water in which we live and move. *Our preaching reduces creation simply to the context in which we live. For a sacramental people, the context is part of the content: the creator of heaven and earth is manifest in creation.*

I recall taking a group of young people from city housing projects, ironically called Potomac Gardens, to a country house for an overnight. The adults were concerned about drinking and sex among the kids. The kids were preoccupied with discovering the woods and the lake. Living in a "garden" where no flowers could grow, they were entranced with the earth and the water, with building a fire and breathing air. Everyone can identify in some way with creation. Asthmatics can preach about the quality of air, Los Angelenos can lecture on the abuse of the automobile, and caring seniors can look after the endangered species and deflowered spaces. Listen and look. In your own situation, you will find stories of God's people's love and concern for his work and creation. Share the stories and the observations. The context of

our living and how we shape it is part of the content of God's gift to us. Connect with those in your congregation who already pay attention to earth, air, fire, and water.

Once connected, vision improves. A pastor of a new parish had a piece of property on a winding country road. A housing development in the area overtaxed sewers and roadways. The skimpy roadways became clogged with commuters morning and evening. The same roads became a challenge to hard-driving teenagers on weekend nights. It took a series of fatal accidents before people came together to take on the county government to widen the road while attempting to preserve the beauty and feel of the country. Funeral liturgies led to life decisions. A shared problem became the cause of shared action. Petition and praise can move from church to neighborhoods. It is a very Catholic movement. Sacraments take life. Life to liturgy to life.

The possibilities abound for all of us, right where we live. This is not creating a group of fanatic greenies by simply preaching the word in the rhythms of everyday. Inner city preachers have been doing it for years. Connections between materialistic and individualistic lifestyles and the destruction of our environment can be reflected in your homilies through example and application.

The more subtle and challenging side of preaching the environment as a moral question is to move us preachers from individualistic targets—Jesus and me—to an appreciation of the Genesis vision of creation in harmony, a vision of a new heaven and earth reflecting God's goodness and a desire that we humans live in community. If God is one, then all creation is one. We are brothers and sisters of one another and brothers and sisters of the earth. Francis and Clare tapped into a long tradition in the Hebrew and Christian understanding of the world. Pope John

Paul II is passionate in explaining and applying this tradition to today's issues.

Pointing our congregations to the mission of re-creating the face of the earth is never easy in a culture of *me first*. Fidelity to this Gospel requires understanding the wondrous web of interconnectedness. Pointing out the inconsistencies of those who would save spotted owls and baby whales while sanctioning abortion communicates our concern for the seamless garment of life in all of creation.

Let me close with a quote from Dostoyevsky that we use for prayer:

*My brother used to ask the birds to forgive him; that sounds senseless but it is right; for all is like the ocean, all things flow and touch each other; a disturbance in one place is felt at the other end of the world. It may be folly to beg forgiveness of the birds, but the birds would be happier at your side—a little happier anyway—and children and all animals, if you yourself were nobler than you are now. It's all like an ocean, I tell you. Then you would pray to the birds, too, consumed by an all embracing love in a sort of transport and pray that they will forgive you your sin. Prize this ecstasy, however senseless it may seem to men (The Brothers Karamazov).*

Mine your experiences; seek to understand the relationships; move yourself and our hearers to conversion and to considered action. Listen to the teaching of the Church. Pray and reflect. What once may have appeared senseless and remote will become good sense.

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*Rev. Raymond B. Kemp is a fellow of the Woodstock Theological Center and is co-coordinator of Preaching the Just Word. Former pastor of both St. Cyprian and St. Augustine, historic African American parishes in Washington, D.C., he has served as secretary for Parish Life and Worship and director of Renew in the Washington Archdiocese.*

# Prayer Services for Use on Special Occasions

The prior two parish resource kits, *Renewing the Face of the Earth* (pp. 22–25), and *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation* (pp. 11–16), offered a variety of prayer services to help provide spiritual grounding for God's creation. This resource offers several prayers from *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* as well as two prayer services for interfaith and ecumenical occasions from *Prayers of Blessings and Praise for All Occasions*.

## ROGATION DAYS: BLESSING OF FIELDS AND GARDENS\*

The Rogation Days were traditionally celebrated on the three days before the solemnity of the Ascension. They may now be celebrated at any time when it is appropriate to ask that gardens, fields, and orchards be blessed during the coming season. The blessing takes place in the midst of the garden or field.

*All make the sign of the cross. The leader begins:*

Let us together praise the Lord,  
from whom we have rain from the heavens  
and abundance from the earth.  
Blessed be God now and for ever.

*All respond: Amen.*

*The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing:*

Let us bless God, whose might has created the earth and whose providence has enriched it. God has given us the earth to cultivate, so that we may gather its fruits to sustain life. As we thank God for this bounty, let us learn also, as the Gospel teaches, to seek first God's way of holiness: then all we need will be given us besides.

*Then the Scripture is read:*

Listen to the words of the book of Genesis:

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, . . .

God said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it." And so it happened: the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw how good it was.

\*From *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*. Contains excerpts from the English translation of *Book of Blessings* © 1988, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved.



God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give them all the green plants for food." And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.

GENESIS 1:1, 11-12, 29-31

*(The family's Bible may be used for an alternate reading such as Mark 4:26-29.)*

*The reader concludes:* This is the Word of the Lord.

*All respond:* Thanks be to God.

*After a time of silence, the prayers of intercession may take the form of the Litany of the Saints (page 348 [Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers]). This may be chanted while processing through the garden or fields.*

*Then the leader prays:*

O God,  
from the very beginning of time  
you commanded the earth to bring forth vegetation  
and every fruit of every kind.  
You provide the sower with seed and give bread to eat.  
Grant, we pray, that this land,  
enriched by your bounty and cultivated by human hands,  
may be fertile with abundant crops.  
Then your people, enriched by the gifts of your goodness,  
will praise you unceasingly now and for all ages unending.

Grant this through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

*All make the sign of the cross as the leader concludes:*

May God, the source of every good, bless us and give success to our work, so that we may receive the joy of his gifts and praise his name now and for ever.

R. Amen.

*The leader says:* Let us bless the Lord.

*All respond, making the sign of the cross:*  
Thanks be to God.

*The blessing may conclude with song. The following may be sung to the tune of "All Creatures of Our God and King."*

Dear mother earth, who day by day  
Unfolds rich blessing on our way,  
O praise God! Alleluia!  
The fruits and flowers that verdant grow,  
Let them his praise abundant show.  
O praise God, O praise God,  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

*(Translated by William H. Draper © J. Curcic & Sons)*

## ASSUMPTION DAY BLESSING OF PRODUCE\*

On August 15, or another appropriate day, the produce of fields, gardens, and orchards may be blessed. Those who take part should assemble in an appropriate place around the grains, fruits, and vegetables to be blessed.

*All make the sign of the cross. The leader begins:*

Let us ever praise and extol God's all-embracing providence, who gives us food from the fruits of the earth. Blessed be God for ever.

*All respond:* Blessed be God for ever.

*The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing:*

The Lord has bestowed the fruits of the earth for the benefit of all the world's people. May we share with all in need and so be good stewards of God's earth and its abundance. We remember the words Mary speaks in the gospel story of the visitation: "The hungry he has filled with good things."

*Then the Scripture is read:*

Listen to the words of the prophet Joel:

Fear not, O land!  
exult and rejoice!  
for the LORD has done great things.  
Fear not, beasts of the field!  
for the pastures of the plain are green;  
The tree bears its fruit,  
the fig tree and the vine give their yield.  
And do you, O children of Zion,  
exult and rejoice in the LORD, your God!  
He has given you the teacher of justice:  
He has made the rain come down for you,  
the early and the late rain as before.  
The threshing floors shall be full of grain  
and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.  
You shall eat and be filled,  
and shall praise the name of the LORD, your God,  
Because he has dealt wondrously with you. . . .

\*From *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*. Contains excerpts from the English translation of *Book of Blessings* © 1988, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved.

(The family's Bible may be used for an alternate reading such as Deuteronomy 28:1-6.)

The reader concludes: This is the Word of the Lord.

All respond: Thanks be to God.

## OTHER PRAYERS FOR ANIMALS\*

O Heavenly Father,  
protect and bless all things that have breath.  
Guard them from all evil,  
and let them sleep in peace.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Hear our humble prayer, O God,  
for our friends the animals, your creatures.  
We pray especially for all that are suffering in any way:  
for the overworked and underfed,  
the hunted, lost, or hungry;  
for all in captivity or ill-treated,  
and for those that must be put to death.

For those who deal with them,  
we ask a gentle heart of compassion,  
gentle hands, and kindly words.  
Make us all true friends to animals  
and worthy followers of our merciful Savior, Jesus Christ.  
R. Amen.

## BLESSING FOR THE PRODUCTS OF NATURE\*

Blessed are you, O God,  
Creator of the universe,  
who have made all things good  
and given the earth for us to cultivate.  
Grant that we may always use created things gratefully  
and share your gifts with those in need,  
out of the love of Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.  
R. Amen

## BLESSING FOR THE PRODUCTS OF HUMAN LABOR\*

Almighty and ever-living God,  
you have made us stewards over the created world,  
so that in all things we might honor the demands of charity.  
Graciously hear our prayers,  
that your blessing may come upon all those  
who use these objects for their needs.  
Let them always see you as the good surpassing every good  
and love their neighbor with upright hearts.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
R. Amen.

## PRAYER ON CONTEMPLATING NATURE+

You, O God, Majestic Creator, are the origin of all life.  
Nothing can exclude itself from your creative influence.  
You are wonderful in your words and in your sovereignty.  
Amazed, I contemplate the perfection of the world  
you created for human beings.

You are unmatched in your power and in your goodness.  
O Lord, you direct like a conductor the orchestration of a  
storm, and you shape like a sculptor  
the petals of a flower.  
You are prodigious in your majesty  
and in your wisdom.  
Lord, you have fashioned human beings to accept the  
challenges of nature and to be your voice in creation.  
O Lord and King, Majestic Creator, you have made your  
mystery transparent in the world you have created.  
I worship you in your creation and in your providence.  
Amen.

## PRAYER TO THE CREATOR+

Blessed are you, Creator of the Universe  
who out of darkness brought forth light  
and who rule the universe by your word.  
Send far away from us  
the darkness of error and evil  
and direct us to the knowledge of your name's glory.  
Blessed are you, Creator of the Universe,  
who brought forth from nothing everything  
and renew unceasingly days and seasons.  
Be merciful with us in your great power  
and multiply in us the grace of your kindness.  
Blessed are you, Creator of the Universe,  
who created human beings with amazing perfection  
and who want your image and likeness to shine in them.  
Accept us all under your shining gaze  
and grant that we may live up to your aim of love.  
Blessed are you, Creator of the Universe,  
who sustain all beings in time and space and penetrate  
everything with your overpowering presence.  
Fulfill the innermost desires of your heart  
and guide in peace  
the destiny of all human beings.  
Blessed are you, Creator of the Universe,  
who communicate your energy to all created beings  
and direct humankind in your path.  
Make us your co-workers in the harmony of the world,  
and help us to fulfill in history  
the mystery of your creation. Amen.

\*From *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*. Contains excerpts from the English translation of Book of Blessings © 1988, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved.

+From *Prayers of Blessing and Praise for All Occasions* © 1987, Hugo Schlesinger and Humberto Porto.

# The International Connection

## *The Call to Solidarity and Global Environmental Stewardship*

Interdependence in our global civilization is a fact of life today. How we respond to this reality is a matter of faith and morals. Worldwide instantaneous communications, global economic markets, and travel and human migration on an unprecedented scale make us acutely aware of our interrelatedness. The news media alone bring us intimately in contact with the simplest lives in remote villages and to the more complicated and yet equally distant circumstances of those who live in the ornate halls of wealth and power. The explosive growth of international markets has made more people conscious of both the opportunities and vulnerabilities of this expansion. In its unique way, the environmental concern that transcends borders and oceans adds a dimension of inescapable interdependence. What we do in our local community can affect lives 12,000 miles away.

The fact of this intricate modern interdependence is now evident, as is the need for a greater practice of the virtue of solidarity and the development of institutions to deal with this interdependence. In 1963, Pope John XXIII in his letter *Peace on Earth* emphasized this growing interdependence and extended the notion of the common good from a nation state focus to a global one. It is this concept of the universal common good that can serve as the basis for a global environmental ethic. Pope John Paul II in his statement *The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility* wrote

*Today, the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to*

*“The universal common good can serve as a foundation for a global environmental ethic.”*

### **RENEWING THE EARTH**

*be the responsibility of everyone. . . . [I]ts various aspects demonstrate the need for concerted efforts aimed at establishing the duties and obligations that belong to individuals, people, States and the international community (no. 15).*

The Church has as one of its primary functions the educative role of helping believers and other people of good will form their consciences so that they can see environmental issues as having moral content. A critical aspect of this conscience development is forming and practicing the virtue of solidarity, “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good” (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 38), that can serve as the foundation for our response to environmental issues. This conscience formation is not limited to individuals but must be developed and practiced by communities, including relations between highly industrialized and developing nations.

The following articles seek to highlight several major themes of concern as the Catholic community

becomes more engaged in international environmental issues. These reflections also emphasize that the universal Church transcends borders, races, and cultures. The Church is obliged to deal with global issues like the environment and has the institutional and community capacity to do so. These reflections are intended to be used by small groups in the parish to generate discussion and action.

Each of these reflections, written by the International Policy staff of the USCC, raises key international environmental issues and emphasizes the Church's growing concern.

- The first article puts the entire environmental concern within the context of “sustainable development,” the goal of fostering economic and social development for current and future generations without harming the environment. As the U.S. bishops pointed out in their 1991 statement, *Renewing the Earth*, “[O]nly with equitable sustainable development can poor nations curb continuing environmental degradation and avoid the destructive effects of the kind of overdevelopment (in the richer nations) that has used natural resources irresponsibly.” The task of sustainable development is one faced by all the peoples of the world, both rich and poor.

The next several articles highlight regions of the world where there are significant environmental issues and where the Church is actively addressing these questions.



CRS

- The first region is Latin America. This article emphasizes the Latin American Church's recognition of environmental issues over many years.
- As the article on Africa illustrates, the Church in Africa is a vibrant and growing community that faces significant social, economic, and political problems, including environmental threats and the new problem of environmental refugees.
- The article on Europe acknowledges that environmental problems are issues for both Western and Eastern Europe and that the Church has begun to express its concern.
- The final article highlights the work of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the U.S. bishops' overseas relief and development agency. For over fifty years, CRS has assisted some of the poorest people in the world as an expression of the

solidarity of U.S. Catholics. Now, CRS takes up the challenge of the environment and development in its solidarity with the poor of the world.

This series of articles is complemented with practical suggestions on how to make solidarity a reality. Included is an excellent list of organizations and ways to become directly involved in addressing international environmental issues.

At the outset of their 1991 environment statement, *Renewing the Earth*, the U.S. bishops reminded us that

*[A]t its core, the environmental crisis is a moral challenge. It calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God's creation.*

This is the true challenge of solidarity for all of us in a world growing smaller every day.



# The Flourishing of the Human Family—Protecting the Environment: The Sustainable Development Model by Barbara Kohnen

**S**ustainable development is a term receiving increased public attention. Essentially, it means meeting both today's economic and social needs and those of future generations without damaging the environment. While this goal is clear, its achievement is complicated by current economic, social, environmental, and political realities.

Complications include a growing list of major environmental concerns, from global warming to deforestation and pollution to increasing income disparities among nations and peoples as the global economy becomes more integrated. Today, ten developing countries known as emerging markets are growing at a faster rate than even the industrialized countries, accelerating worldwide economic growth at a pace never before known. The number of billionaires doubled in seven years, and today the combined income of the world's 358 billionaires equals the combined income of half the world's population—2.5 billion people! One in four people in the world earns less than \$370 per year. As the number of people living in absolute poverty rises, employment is increasingly insecure, wages are falling, and states are curtailing health care and education.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We often talk about development as a way to expand opportunities for poor people and reduce poverty. But sustainable development is a wider concept that emphasizes long-term solutions to poverty. Linking poverty and the environment, sustainable development implies the notion of a shared future, an interrelatedness among peoples and nations and between people

*“A just and sustainable society and world are not an optional ideal, but a moral and practical necessity.”*

### RENEWING THE EARTH

and their environment. As Pope John Paul II said in his 1990 *World Day of Peace* statement, “the ecological crisis reveals the urgent need for a new solidarity, especially in relations between the developing nations and those that are highly industrialized.”

The industrialized nations are the key to making sustainable development a reality. Their consumption of resources brings benefits but is often wasteful. As U.S. citizens, we make consumer choices that influence the prospects for sustainable development throughout the world. Our lifestyle matters. When we purchase a car, it affects oil consumption and air quality. When we purchase recyclable goods, the market for recyclables increases. When we choose not to use plastic or paper bags and cups, we reduce the demand for those products and occasionally prevent the commercial logging of forests in developing countries. When we purchase non-toxic cleaning products, we help ensure safer water for us and for people in other parts of the world.

In contrast to the richer nations, about half the world's poorest people live in marginal or ecologically fragile areas where land is least productive.

For most of these people, the immediate environment is their resource base and their source of livelihood. Often, they are forced to exploit scarce natural resources or pollute the environment because they are struggling just to stay alive. Weak land reform policies or inequitable distribution of land often push poor farmers to marginal lands, such as steep hillsides. Lacking alternatives, poor families often over-farm the hillsides until the soil is depleted and the hillside eroded, then move on to another steep hillside. Their inability to access better land fuels the cycle of environmental degradation and increased economic insecurity.

Sustainable development suggests that problems are best identified and addressed through the active involvement of locally affected communities. For example, twenty years ago, the Indian village of Kesharpur in the state of Orissa was completely deforested. Springs had dried up; gullies formed where monsoons fell; fertile top soil was rapidly disappearing; and the villagers grew increasingly short of fuel-wood, fodder, and water. The village acknowledged the problem and, with the help of a local non-governmental organization, established a tree nursery, banned goats from grazing in the most degraded areas, and persuaded local authorities to stop commercial logging. Today, Kesharpur has dense trees again, the springs have returned, the soil is richer, and grazing is closely managed. The result is better preservation of resources and improved livelihoods for the villagers.

In Honduras, several community-based organizations are using new agricultural techniques or reviving old

techniques that are low-cost, feasible, and often do not require the use of expensive harmful chemicals. Some farmers who do not use chemicals on their crops are applying for organic certification so they can sell their produce at higher prices. In southern Mexico, several coffee cooperatives sell their organically grown beans in the United States and Europe to companies like United Airlines and Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

## POLICY ENVIRONMENT

While important, personal lifestyle changes in the richer nations and community development projects in developing nations cannot by themselves create long-term sustainable economic development. The global economy and poverty operate at many levels, from the international marketplace to the village. International economic forces often can benefit the rich while undermining the livelihoods of the poor through low commodity prices, crushing external debt burdens, volatile capital markets, and misallocated aid. At the local level, unequal rights to land and productive resources, inadequate provision of health care and education, and the inability of the poorest people to influence decisions affecting their lives contribute to poverty. Corrupt or unaccountable governments can misuse public funds or marginalize the poor in the name of economic progress.

Despite the number of variables influencing sustainable development, local, national and international policies that are targeted toward the poor can often make a large difference in their lives. Governments decide overall budget priorities, social welfare, tax structures, natural resource policies, and land reform, and can encourage growth in the poorest sectors. When human rights are fully respected and the poor participate in decision making for their own future, possibilities for

real sustainable development arise.

Through the political process, we can support sustainable development when our elected officials vote on types and priorities of foreign assistance. Although official U.S. development and humanitarian assistance is just one-third of one percent of the total federal budget, by expressing our concern for the environment and development, we can directly influence funding for development assistance, research, and education. The previous examples of sustainable development projects in Honduras and Mexico are supported by the Inter-American Foundation.

In addition to aid, governments promote intergovernmental and corporate responsibility through international treaties and legislation, including the recent Climate Change Convention, the Montreal Protocol on the ozone, and the Declaration of Human Rights, which the United States and most other nations signed in 1948. The Declaration of Human Rights says that each person has a right to certain personal civil liberties as well as economic and social rights such as health, food, shelter, and work. While the United States has ratified the treaty guaranteeing civil and political rights, it has not extended guarantees to cover economic and social rights. Pope John Paul II has gone further and called for including a "right to a safe environment" in the United Nations Human Rights charter.

We can also support legislation establishing codes of conduct for U.S. businesses. These codes would urge firms to engage in responsible environmental protection and practices and adhere to basic labor standards. All of these measures—lifestyle changes, community development, official aid, codes of conduct, and treaties—are practical ways we can all support sustainable development.



# The Church in Latin America and the Ecological Question by Thomas Quigley

The murder in 1988 of Chico Mendes, the Brazilian rubber tapper and human rights advocate, has become a global symbol of the relationship between preserving workers' rights and protecting the environment. Chico's first concern was for social justice, but he came to see that human rights, indeed the very survival of the rubber tappers, was tied to the preservation of the rain forests.

The Church in Brazil, through its Land Pastoral Commission and other efforts, has long been a leader in addressing the problems of indigenous peoples and the land. But questions of land tenure and the rights of native peoples have often been posed as being in conflict with environmental concerns. The Chico Mendes synthesis has only lately become a norm. This article looks at how the Church in Latin America, a leader for social justice, has addressed development and environmental issues.

## THE CHURCH IN COLOMBIA

In 1973, the Colombian bishops issued a pastoral on *Justice and Christian Requirements*, stressing the moral demand that all must help preserve the environment. Similarly, in their 1981 document, *Ecology and the Social Teachings of the Church*, they called violations of this demand sinful, whether the sin be personal, social or—a concept Latin American ethicists have often stressed—structural. Threats to the environment are clear “signs of the times,” that require the Church and each Christian to defend the environment.

Using the terms closely associated with Latin American pastoral theology,

“[We] urge Christians to undertake dialogue with the North, through the channels of the Catholic Church as well as through ecological and ecumenical movements.”

**SANTO DOMINGO CONCLUSIONS: NEW EVANGELIZATION, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, CHRISTIAN CULTURE, NO. 170**  
Conference of  
Latin American Bishops  
(Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano)

they reference their own pastoral of 1982 in which they declared:

*The nation cannot continue neglecting to preserve and improve the environment in which we live. No ecological imbalance continues without redress. Human sins against nature redound always to the detriment of humankind itself* (no. 1).

They cited as one example the constant cutting down of trees without adequate provision for reforestation which is already leading to tragic consequences for the country's rivers, soil, and even climate. Despite their 1982 plea for action on this “extremely serious national problem,” they noted five years later that the situation had worsened.

Among the key causes of this deterioration, the bishops cite the immunity from sanctions enjoyed by those who aggress against nature, and the extreme poverty of many Dominicans that leads them to environmentally destructive behavior. The bishops sound a theme heard throughout much of the Third World:

*It is not right that those who have greater resources, whether countries, cities, groups or individuals, should lean toward excessive consumption which, in addition to being a provocative insult to the poor, is an evil misappropriation of natural resources necessary for the have-nots of the world (no. 39). . . . In the case of non-renewable resources, the highly industrialized and developed countries*

the bishops noted that preaching the Gospel includes both *anuncio* and *denuncia*: The ecological issues of guarding God's gift of nature should be part of the Church's normal proclamation, announcing these concerns as an imperative of justice and an exercise of charity. Whatever harms the ecology should be denounced.

## THE CHURCH IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

One of the more extensive Latin American statements on the environment, comparable to the U.S. bishops' 1991 letter, *Renewing the Earth*, was the 1987 pastoral of the Dominican bishops, *The Relation of Humankind to Nature*. At the beginning of the letter,

*cannot exercise a monopoly of exploitation and use of these resources without taking into account the present and future needs of the countries supplying those resources. Nor, in their turn, can the supplying countries, for short-term economic gain, steal and give away this patrimony of the nation, present and future (no. 42).*

In examining the lives of the poor, the bishops note that although the slash and burn methods of the small farmers contribute greatly to the soil depletion and deforestation, it is not the poor *campesino* who is most at fault:

*The government has lacked foresight, control, rigorous enforcement and efficient planning. Many of those charged with oversight of our resources have been guilty of negligence and complicity and greed. There has been unforgivable carelessness and avarice on the part of landowners incredibly insensitive to the ecological problems (no. 22).*

In the see-judge-act approach typical of Latin American pastoral documents, the bishops suggest a score of specific suggestions for action, both by national and local governments and by the faithful. Every sector of the Church must incorporate environmental concerns within their ongoing activities. Parish priests and pastoral agents, Catholic schools, newspapers and radio stations, Caritas Dominicana and the entire Church are all urged to study, reflect, and act to preserve and hand on the physical patrimony of the nation.

## THE CHURCH IN BRAZIL

For a third example of the approach to ecology by the Church in Latin

America, we return to the Brazilian episcopate. Perhaps no country better illustrates the present crisis: the immense Amazon rain forest, the lungs of the entire planet, is under relentless attack. This is the dramatic battle in which Chico Mendes gave his life: the struggle to save endangered nature and protect the rights and dignity of every human being, especially the most vulnerable and needy.

Individual Brazilian prelates and state conferences of bishops have spoken often to the ecological crises facing their country and—because it is Brazil—the world.

As their contribution to the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, the “Earth Summit,” the Brazilian bishops’ conference convened pastoral agents from each of the sectors of the Church’s social ministries, experts in ecology, agronomy, urban planning, geography, and politics, and a team of theologians. Following analyses of the present situation and of the sustainable development model, and an ethical reflection, they issued *The Church and the Ecological Question* in May 1992. The text has three sections:

- “The Challenge of the Right to Life” provides a critical analysis of the dominant economic model and questions whether the market is sufficient to overcome the environmental crisis and favor a “human and social ecology.”
- “Sustainable Development: For Whom?” calls for alternative models that rigorously question what is being sustained and for whom and suggests a preferred model of “democratic sustainability,” a political and ethical option that no longer accepts efficiency, functionality, and economic viability as fundamental values.
- “Human Responsibility for God’s Creation” takes a self-critical look





at the role Christians, the churches, and our theology have played in creating a utilitarian model of development that has harmed the environment. This recognition brings us to a fresh reading of Scripture (especially Gen 1), seeing that we are called to guard and cultivate creation, not dominate and subject it. "Creation is the dwelling of the life-giving Spirit of God, just as the Word dwells in the humanity of Jesus."

For humankind to realize its true destiny and calling, we must overcome the deep ideological and theological roots of the development model generated by modernity, overcoming exaggerated anthropocentrism, and struggle for the integrity of creation, recognizing the importance of every being, animate or not. Today's environmental crisis is for all of us a *visit from God*, who calls us to a radical conversion enabling us to understand nature as God's gift, to be accepted with reverence and praise, veneration and respect, compassion and tenderness.

### **CONSEJO EPISCOPAL LATINOAMERICANO (CELAM)**

The third and fourth general conferences of the Latin American episcopates, Puebla (1979) and Santo Domingo (1992), addressed environmental issues. Puebla stressed that uncontrolled industrialization and urbanization had depleted natural resources and polluted the environment. "Once again we affirm that the consumptionist tendencies of the more developed nations must undergo a thorough revision. They must take into account the elementary needs of the poor peoples who constitute the majority of the world's population" (no. 496).

Santo Domingo gave environmental concerns an ecumenical thrust, encouraging "cooperation in defending creation and ecological balance as a way of coming together with other religions." The document notes that the Rio "Earth Summit" brought "to the world's attention the gravity of the ecological crisis" but questions aspects of the proposals for sustainable development:

*[W]e must ask whether all these aspirations are legitimate and who pays the cost of such development, as well as who it is intended to benefit. It cannot be a kind of development that gives preference to small groups at the expense of the world's great impoverished majorities* (no. 169).

The bishops at Santo Domingo urged "Christians to undertake dialogue with the North, through the channels of the Catholic Church as well as through ecological and ecumenical movements." Through the Environmental Justice Program, in which USCC is engaged together with our ecumenical and interfaith partners, we look forward to continuing and deepening that North-South dialogue on behalf of justice for the earth and those who inhabit it.

# *Environmental Refugees: A New Chapter in a Familiar Story* by Kevin James Lee

**R**efugees are among the poorest of the poor in the world. But refugees on the world's poorest and often forgotten continent, Africa, face an even greater challenge as they attempt to survive against often insurmountable odds. There are an estimated twenty-five million environmental refugees in the world with the sub-Saharan region hosting over half of them. The twin challenge before Africa and the world is how to care for very vulnerable people—refugees—without damaging the environment.

While the Church's concern for modern environmental problems is relatively new, its work on behalf of refugees is not. The USCC's Migration and Refugee Services (MRS), along with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), has provided pastoral ministry and material assistance to refugees here and abroad for over fifty years and continues to do so. However, the number of refugees and contingent environmental problems confront the Church and the humanitarian and environmental communities with a more intricate problem. This article highlights the link between our need to protect refugees and our need to protect the environment, focusing on sub-Saharan Africa.

There are several categories of refugees. First, political refugees—those who seek asylum from civil war, ethnic tension, and persecution—are in camps all over Africa, but predominately in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. Recently, civil wars in Rwanda and Burundi have caused millions to flee their homelands as refugees. Second, economic refugees flee their homeland because of severe economic hardship. They can be found in many

southern African countries, such as Namibia and Botswana.

The third and newest category is environmental refugees—those who migrate due to drought, soil erosion, desertification, or other environmental problems that prevent them from gaining a secure livelihood in their home country. These refugees are located primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, most notably the Sahel in North Africa and the Horn in the East. Development specialist Joan Martin-Brown has defined environmental refugees as people forced to flee traditional areas that have become "temporarily or permanently unsuitable to support human life."

According to Karen Jacobsen of the Refugee Policy Group, the largest risk to low-income host countries is environmental degradation, which leads to food insecurity. This means that the general population will not have access to sufficient food to support a healthy existence. Healthy existence is linked to the availability of natural resources such as fuelwood, bush meat (wild animals), grazing land, fertile soil, and water.

Africa's refugees are often unfairly blamed for environmental damage. They are accused of exhausting local sources of bush food (animals and edible plants), setting bush fires, using chemicals to catch fish, and chopping down river-edge trees to extend gardens in a desperate attempt to feed themselves. It is important to realize, however, that refugees often aggravate rather than create environmental degradation in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, Malawi hosted over one million political refugees from war-torn Mozambique during the mid and late



1980s. Before the refugees arrived, the country already suffered from severe environmental problems, including land degradation, water contamination, and deforestation. The massive influx of refugees *intensified* the strain on natural resources, rather than creating it.

## LAND DEGRADATION

A closer look at the three environmental problems facing Malawi and a number of other countries can help us understand better the refugee/environment connection. Land degradation refers to the reduced productivity of agricultural and range land that occurs when marginal lands such as semi-arid savannas and hilly terrain are cultivated. Key manifestations include overt desertification (growth of deserts as seen in Mali, Chad, Niger, and Mauritania), to accelerated soil loss with water runoff. More proximate problems include long-term loss of ecosystem integrity as shrubs, weeds, root structure, and other flora that protect the soil are stripped.

Even supposed agricultural reforms can prove to be environmentally harmful. For example, the World Bank reports that in the West African country of Côte d'Ivoire, reforms designed to raise prices for cocoa and coffee encouraged farmers to move into forest areas and practice slash-and-burn techniques, which lead to soil erosion. The World Bank itself largely created this particular aspect of degradation by linking loan packages to reforms of Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa and coffee industry. In this case farmers are attempting to maximize their profit by clearing and consuming land capital. This is a case in which economic factors, not refugees, are responsible for land degradation.

But it can be argued that refugees can intensify environmental destruction because they lack incentives to maintain the environment. Jacobsen

believes that the refugees' uncertain status, combined with their lack of land ownership in the country of asylum and their desire to return home, give them short-term time horizons, which often do not consider the environment. Furthermore, the refugees' unfamiliarity with their new environment makes them slow to adopt sustainable resource-use practices.

*“ . . . we cannot allow a great continent like Africa to go adrift. Yes, for Africa I ask a major effort of international solidarity . . . in today's interdependent world, a whole network of exchanges is forcing nations to live together, whether they like it or not. But there is a need to pass from simply living together to partnership. Isolation is no longer appropriate. ”*

**1995 ADDRESS TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS**  
**Pope John Paul II**

efforts by many African governments to improve water systems and increase their population's accessibility to clean water, forty million fewer Africans lacked access to safe drinking water in the year 1990 than did in 1980.

As refugees migrate to other areas, water and sanitation become more problematic. Increased use places pressure on water sources such as dug wells (boreholes), springs, and streams, leading to their drying up or becoming polluted. Piped water and pump wells in refugee areas also create erosion and drainage problems. Where refugee populations concentrate geographically and become dependent for long periods on these water points, dry seasons bring increased stress on water points and low water levels. African governments alone often lack the financial resources to care for refugees or handle the associated environmental problems.

## DEFORESTATION

Deforestation is perhaps the most significant environmental problem associated with refugees. Trees are cut to meet basic fuel and construction needs of both host and refugee populations. Wood is used for the construction of living quarters and is the principal source of fuel for cooking. Refugee flows require that fallow or forest land be cleared for camp sites. Added livestock browse trees and seedlings and herders prune trees and shrubs to assist animals, leading to overgrazing. Finally, with the commoditization of forest resources, demand for firewood increases, causing more distant woodlands to be affected. Markets for other natural resources such as thatching grass or water also emerge.

Deforestation's end result is devastating:

*The loss of browsing area, flora and fodder for domesticated herds and wild fauna leads to disruption of the natural food*

## WATER CONTAMINATION

It is estimated that one billion people in the developing world live without safe drinking water. Some 30,000 deaths a day occur because of water-borne pathogens, which also cause 75 percent of the world's diseases. Despite



chain and potential eradication of species and fragile ecosystems in marginal areas. Similarly, faster runoff of rain water leads to a decrease in ground water replenishment, increased rates of siltation in rivers and irrigation systems, and greater potential for flooding in catchment zones of formerly forested areas (Refugee Policy Group, Washington, D.C., 1994).

## WHAT CAN BE DONE

Pope John XXIII in *Pacem et Terris* reminds us that

*Every human being has the freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own country; and when there are just reasons for it, the right*

*to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there. The fact that one is a citizen of a particular state does not detract in any way from his membership in the human family as a whole, nor from his citizenship in the world community (no. 25).*

In their pastoral statement on ecology, *Renewing the Earth*, the U.S. Catholic bishops emphasize that “[E]cological concern has now heightened our awareness of just how interdependent our world is. Some of the gravest environmental problems are clearly global. In this shrinking world, everyone

is affected and everyone is responsible. . . .” Both the papal and episcopal statements make clear that refugee and environmental concerns, whether separate or linked, are truly issues of the global common good.

As U.S. Catholics in a worldwide Church, we have important and intimate links with the Church in Africa. We need to deepen those ties through “sister parish” relationships and other means, acknowledging our shared faith and providing spiritual as well as material support. We also need to support the work of CRS and MRS with refugees and promote public policies that can help share the burden borne by poorer countries who must welcome the stranger among them and who often face severe environmental problems at the same time.



# Europe and the Environment: The Church's Call to Respond by Gerard F. Powers

**A**lthough the United States is a land of many cultures and ethnic groups beyond Europe, our nation's political, economic, and social ties with Europe remain strong and vital. The same strong relationship exists between European and American Catholics. An increasingly important dimension of our religious and political links with Europe is concern for the environment. The eclipse of the Cold War allows us to turn some of our attention from intense international political and military conflicts to issues like the environment.

Western Europe and the United States face similar environmental problems. Air and water pollution, urban/suburban sprawl, and land and forest management are challenges on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Because of their economic and political strength, the United States and Western Europe share a leadership role in facing and managing global environmental problems like ozone depletion and global warming. Fortunately, as democracies with very active non-government sectors, the societies of the United States and Western Europe are both conscious of environmental problems and can seek and implement legal environmental protection for their citizens, if they choose.

It is a different story in Central and Eastern Europe. While these countries are becoming more democratic and introducing market reforms, and the end of the Cold War allows more attention to environmental issues in general, it has also confirmed what many suspected: The environment in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union suffers greatly from decades of industrial and agricultural abuse and neglect. The most

*“The urgent need for reconciliation—between industrialized and developing countries, between rich and poor within each country, and also between humankind and God's creation as a whole impels the churches to encourage Christians to rethink their very way of life. ”*

**ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT:  
A CHALLENGE TO OUR LIFESTYLES**  
**Council of European  
Bishop's Conferences**

graphic example of environmental and ecological damage is Chernobyl in Ukraine, where an estimated 3.2 million people, about one million of whom are children, either live in highly radioactive areas or have been evacuated from them.

But other environmental problems associated with heavy industry plague the area. The border region where Poland, the Czech Republic, and the former East Germany all meet has been dubbed the "Black Triangle" and the "Basin of Death" by the international media. In these areas, whole forests of dead and dying trees demonstrate the seriousness of the region's environmental problems. Similarly, Macedonia suffers from substantial industrial environmental damage to its water, air, and

soil around three major industrial towns. Although ecological groups in Macedonia have reported that those areas are close to being uninhabitable, its residents feel they have few other options but to continue to live there.

Unfortunately, even countries with supposedly protective environmental laws are not immune from ecological disaster. The former Soviet Union has substantial national laws protecting the environment, but few are actually enforced. The end of the Cold War and Central and Eastern Europe's turn toward democracy and capitalism created a hope for many improvements in this region of the world including better environmental safety. But the optimism accompanying free markets, democratic legal systems, and Western foreign aid has faded as people have come to realize that improvements will not occur overnight.

Responding to the ecological problems in Europe, groups of Catholic Church leaders, including the German Bishops' Conference, the bishops of Northern Italy, and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences, have each issued statements identifying the threatening international character of the ecological crisis and urging responsible action. They particularly encourage greater international cooperation and responsibility between East and West in sustaining a balance between human communities and the environment through significant lifestyle changes.

## **GERMAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE**

In their statement on the environment and the economy, the German Bishops' Conference's Research Group on the Universal Tasks of the Church makes the case for strong links between the economy and the environment. A key

concern is the rate of technological growth and the still too "prevalent view that man can exploit nature without restraint and all things technically feasible should be put into practice." Without either adopting a utopian view of "pure" nature or underestimating the necessity of technology for economic development, the German bishops' Research Group urges the use of technologies more suited to environmental protection. Greater use of environmentally safe technologies can take place only if recognition is given to "the global character of environmental problems [which] make international strategies imperative." While acknowledging the importance of intergovernmental cooperation, they realize "it is essential to bring parties, business organizations, nature conservation bodies and self-help groups into political dialogue" to solve environmental problems.

### BISHOPS OF NORTHERN ITALY

Echoing Pope John Paul II, the bishops of the Catholic Conference of Lombardy in Northern Italy claim that "every human being has the fundamental right to live in an environment suitable to his health and well being." They suggest that the problems of energy resource depletion, pollution, and environmental deterioration play a significant role in the development of human life. Since the human person is not simply a material being, the bishops call for seeing the heart of the ecological crisis as not just a crisis of land and its resources, "but it should also be seen as a crisis of the underlying spiritual values." In this vein, they do not seek technical solutions, a return to nature, or a renunciation of development, but rather development that is "ethically qualified." This means an ecological ethic that respects nature and the human person, requires "moderation in consumption," and calls for attention to the effects of our actions on nature and others. Ultimately, the

Italian bishops see that "ecological awareness correctly understood is no less than a dimension of Christian asceticism," that will require new personal and community lifestyles.

### COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

In the summer of 1995, an ecumenical gathering including Catholic Church representatives and church-related organizations from twenty-two European countries, Canada, Chile, and the Philippines met in Crete specifically to discuss the Churches' responsibility to seek environmental justice in the face of a growing world economy. As a result of that meeting, the bishops issued a statement, *Environment and Development: A Challenge to Our Lifestyles*, which holds that a call for a new lifestyle is at the heart of a resolution to the environmental crisis—a task that is "inseparably linked to a strong commitment to justice and peace in a sustainable society."

Because this conference was attended by representatives from Western and Eastern Europe, the message of solidarity was clear but with different consequences. For Western Europe, the bishops urge a less consumptive lifestyle to combat environmental problems. Eastern Europe faces both a challenge to clean its environment with the help of Western nations and at the same time develop its economy in an environmentally sound manner. Participants from Eastern Europe expressed the view that "the consumption-based society characteristic of Western Europe at present is not the model they would wish to follow." The European bishops concluded that the Church has a significant role to play in helping people and societies understand the significance of this issue from a moral perspective and to form their consciences with more sensitivity to their responsibility to care for God's creation.



# Catholic Relief Services and the Environment

by Thomas Remington and William C'Keefe

**A**s the international relief and development organization of the American Catholic community, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) responds to the bishops' call to care for God's creation while protecting human dignity. Throughout the world, CRS helps poor people to exercise stewardship over the natural resources upon which they depend for survival. The ultimate goal is not only to protect the environment, but also to increase the capacity of the poor to use the environment for their long-term development.

As the rural population and the demand for land have increased in many countries, soil erosion and deforestation have accelerated at an alarming rate. Though poor farmers have caused much environmental degradation, CRS believes they ultimately are critical to halting and reversing the problem. CRS targets these poor farmers and increases their capacity to use their water, land, and forests wisely.

To increase agricultural yields on scarce land, the rural poor need additional water to cultivate a dry season crop, in addition to the traditional rainy season crop. Rather than investing in high-tech irrigation systems to meet this need, CRS works with farmers to improve their traditional water systems. This is generally more cost-effective and can be managed locally. For example, the Mayan Indians in the Guatemalan highlands have developed a simple system that captures water in small reservoirs and transports it in plastic piping to their maize and potato fields. Gravity provides pressure sufficient to power sprinklers, that are moved by hand around the fields. CRS is now transferring this technology to the Quechua Indians in the

*“We ask the Catholic community: How are we called to care for God's creation? How may we apply our social teaching, with its emphasis on the life and dignity of the human person, to the challenge of protecting the earth, our common home? ”*

## RENEWING THE EARTH

Ecuadorian Andes. Access to this irrigation system reduces the risk of crop loss due to drought and enables these farmers to grow high value crops, such as carrots and onions, for sale.

Devastating drought in Ethiopia has left small farmers vulnerable to famine and their land exposed to erosion. Farmers know how to construct terraces to reduce erosion and to prevent the loss of fertile top soil. Their immediate food needs, however, often force them to leave their homes immediately after the harvest to seek work in the cities. Consequently, they are frequently unable to protect their soil as they might wish. To solve this problem, a CRS project provides food to poor farmers who, in exchange, stay on their farms during the dry season and construct soil and water conservation structures. This project increases cereal production and, more importantly, contributes to the long-term sustainability of the land.

Throughout the humid tropics, farmers have traditionally allowed agricultural land to rest to avoid erosion for as long as ten or twenty years, after only a few years of cultivation. They shift production to new land, on which they cut down and burn all the trees, releasing the nutrients stored in the vegetation. Increasing population in the mountains of central Guinea in West Africa is forcing farmers to clear and cultivate land without an extended rest period, causing increased runoff and soil erosion. CRS plans to work with these farmers to develop permanent fields in the valley, where it is possible to grow two crops per year: rice during the rainy season and market vegetables during the cool dry season. Permanent cultivation of these lowlands will relieve the pressure on the steeply sloping hillsides, which can then be planted with trees that further protect the slopes, such as avocado or mango.

CRS believes that the key to protecting the environment is meeting the needs of the rural poor. Though increasing rural population is a major cause of environmental degradation, it also is an opportunity to invest in productive, labor intensive cropping systems. By working with farm families to increase the productivity and profitability of their farms, CRS can halt and reverse the degradation of their water, land, and forests.

During the last several years, CRS has formulated an internationally respected environmental program. Staff from many of the eighty countries in which CRS works are learning and exchanging lessons about protecting natural resources and increasing the productivity and sustainability of small farms throughout the developing



CNS/M. Lueders

world. As described above, CRS programs in Guatemala, Ethiopia, and Guinea exemplify how these lessons are making a difference in the lives of the poor.

To further its environmental programming, CRS created an Environmental Technical Unit in 1994. The unit's immediate priorities are to address accelerating land degradation, which contributes to the chronic undernourishment of 800 million poor; inadequate sanitation for an estimated one-third of the world's population; lack of safe drinking water, affecting one billion people; and severe indoor air pollution, affecting hundreds of millions of women and children. These factors cause severe and sometimes fatal health and environmental problems that can be prevented.

In addition to its overseas project support, CRS educates American Catholics about and involves them in its efforts to improve the environment to benefit the poor. Operation Rice Bowl, The Work of Human Hands program, and Foodfast sensitize parishioners to the concerns of the poor, the experience of their lives, and the Church's efforts to help them fashion better lives for themselves.

It is only by fostering human dignity that we care for God's creation. Through Catholic Relief Services, the American Catholic community continues to answer the call of the impoverished communities of the world by applying the Church's belief in the power of community initiative and teamwork to make earth-friendly development possible.



# The International Connection Discussion Questions

**T**hese questions are designed for small groups in the parish (for example, Renew groups and religious education classes). The questions can be used with the preceding articles to explore the connections between American Catholics and the environmental challenges faced by our sisters and brothers around the globe.

## **The Flourishing of the Human Family—Protecting the Environment: The Sustainable Development Model**

1. What is meant by “sustainable development”?
2. What is the connection between sustainable development and the values of our faith?
3. In what ways do our individual actions affect the global environment?
4. How does the United States promote—or fail to promote—sustainable development?

## **The Church in Latin America and the Ecological Question**

1. Deforestation or forest damage is a major concern in parts of Latin America, as in parts of North America. What are some common strategies for addressing this issue?
2. According to the bishops of Brazil, “We are called to guard and cultivate creation, not dominate and subject it.” Looking at our own communities and our own country, in what ways do we dominate and subject creation? In what ways do we guard and cultivate it?

3. The Latin American bishops claim that “consumptionist tendencies” must be revised to protect the poor, who constitute the majority of the world’s population. How can we respond to this challenge?

## **Environmental Refugees: A New Chapter in a Familiar Story**

1. What is the connection between the growth in the number of refugees around the world and environmental concerns?
2. In what ways can refugees be helped so that their impact on the environment is minimized?
3. What can we do as individuals and as Americans to address this problem?
4. The U.S. Catholic Church resettle many refugees. How can your parish help welcome them and learn more about social, political, and environmental conditions in their homelands and what can be done about them?

## **Europe and the Environment: The Church’s Call to Respond**

1. Western Europe faces many of the same environmental challenges that we face in the United States. What are these challenges, and what are some common strategies for addressing them?
2. The Italian bishops seek development that is “ethically qualified.” What might this mean in the United States?



*Jacklyn Bovino and Maggie DiVito, parishioners at St. Anne’s in Fairlawn, New Jersey, write letters for a Seed/Pen Pal exchange program for African missions.*

3. How might Eastern European countries avoid a “consumption-based society” as they adopt democracy and capitalism?

## **Catholic Relief Services and the Environment**

1. How do CRS’s service and development projects affect the environment?
2. One way for American Catholics to respond to environmental challenges in developing countries is to support CRS’s sustainable development projects. What can parishes do to increase awareness of these projects among their members?

# Practical Ways to Make the International Connection Work for You

Often the greatest challenge for parish social ministry leaders is connecting local parishes to the universal Church and to the needs and concerns of people and communities around the world. In the area of environmental justice, it is particularly important that we meet this challenge since our environmental health is linked inextricably with that of our brothers and sisters around the globe. Here are some simple suggestions for addressing international environmental concerns at the parish level.

## DIRECT SERVICE

In many underdeveloped nations, anything that relieves poverty also helps improve environmental conditions since most impoverished areas lack such basics as clean water, trash removal, and sanitation facilities. Moreover, because of their limited resources, poor people are often forced to over-farm small plots until the soil is depleted and the land begins to erode. Therefore, a wide range of services that contribute to the health and welfare of the poor around the globe also contribute to the health of the environment. Listed below are organizations and programs that give parishes, schools, other organizations, or individuals opportunities to provide financial and other assistance to poor communities around the world.

**American Bishops Overseas Appeal:** Parishioners can promote this annual collection, which supports four Catholic service agencies—Catholic Relief Services, NCCB Migration and Refugee Services, the Holy Father's Relief Program, and the USCC

Department of Social Development and World Peace—working in seventy-three countries to provide both immediate and long-term relief from poverty and suffering [(202) 541-3315].

**Collection for the Church in Latin America:** Through this annual appeal, U.S. Catholics show their solidarity in faith with Catholics in Latin America where more than 50 percent of the population live in extreme poverty [(202) 541-3050].

**Operation Rice Bowl (ORB):** Sponsored by Catholic Relief Services in cooperation with individual dioceses, ORB helps parishes and individuals participate in a Lenten program of prayer, education, fasting, and almsgiving. Its aim is to involve American Catholics with the issues, needs, and daily struggles of families in the developing world. Available in both Spanish and English, the materials provide examples of how ORB support can make a difference and include suggestions for special Lenten observances [(410) 625-2220].

**Water for Life:** Five million children die each year, and many more are left impaired and debilitated from water-borne illnesses. Families and parishes that contribute to this cooperative program of the National Council of Catholic Women and Catholic Relief Services help fund water installation projects in developing countries, thereby reducing waterborne diseases [(202) 682-0334].

**Adopt-a-Parish:** There are several programs that help parishes develop a "sister parish" relationship with a

parish in another part of the world. These relationships often involve regular communication, visits, and financial support. For information on these programs, contact the USCC Office of International Justice and Peace [(202) 541-3197].

## Holy Childhood Association (HCA):

During HCA's seasonal appeals at Advent and Lent, children receive an offering box encouraging sacrificial giving to help less fortunate children in more than 100 countries. The seasonal appeals can work alone or in conjunction with HCA's intercultural education program [(202) 775-8637].

**Help-a-Child:** Cosponsored by the National Council of Catholic Women and Catholic Relief Services, Help-a-Child offers the opportunity to reach out to poor children in India, Thailand, Brazil, and Africa with a one-time contribution or through monthly sponsorship support. The Help-a-Child program assists the development projects of CRS and an indigenous Catholic organization. These projects provide nutritious food, basic health care, clean water, and schooling. Help-a-Child sponsors learn about the cultures and circumstances of the children they are aiding through their letters or through the Help-a-Child newsletter [(202) 682-0334].

**SERRV Self-Help Handcrafts:** Recently SERRV (a Church of the Brethren program) has joined with Catholic Relief Services to publicize in the Catholic community SERRV's parish resources for sponsoring a "Global Giving Fair." Often held before Christmas, the program gives

parishioners a chance to resist the consumerism of the season and purchase gifts made by artisans from around the world who receive a fair return for their work and are involved in decision making [(800) 423-0071].

### **Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA)**

**Association (CNEWA):** This papal agency for humanitarian and pastoral support offers opportunities for parishes, families, and individuals to support the overall mission of the Church, help fund small development projects, and sponsor children in Africa, India, and the Middle East. Sponsors receive a photo and information about their child and may correspond as often as they wish [(212) 826-1480].

### **Catholic Network of Volunteer Service:**

This volunteer service promotes and helps member charitable programs in the United States and throughout the world. It is a resource for people who wish to volunteer or who are returning volunteers from Catholic organizations [(800) 543-5046].

## **EDUCATION**

Most Americans have few opportunities to learn about environmental conditions in other parts of the world, and the pressures of everyday life leave little time for thinking about international environmental issues. Providing information through parish structures—even means as simple as bulletin quotes—can trigger interest that might not otherwise have been generated. Below are some ideas for educational programs on the topic of international environmental justice.

**Bulletin Quotes and Clip Art:** A brief quote or image in the bulletin will reach a wide range of parishioners and may encourage people to think more seriously about international environmental justice. Camera-ready quotes

and clip art can be found in the 1994 and 1995 parish resource kits produced by the bishops' Environmental Justice Program [*Renewing the Face of the Earth*, 1994, No. 766-9, 80 pp.; *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation*, 1995, No. 032-X, (packet) 53 pp.]; (800) 235-8722].

**Videos:** The bishops' Environmental Justice Program produced two videos that provide a succinct overview of Catholic teaching on the environment, including the international dimension. They are ideal for use by parish organizations and schools to stimulate discussion or to offer background for those involved in environmental action. *The Earth Is the Lord's*, with study guide (No. 058-3, 13 min., \$14.95), focuses on the seven themes offered by the U.S. bishops in their pastoral statement, *Renewing the Earth. Hope for a Renewed Earth* (No. 5-072, 60 min., \$19.95) reviews environmental concerns from the Church's perspective and highlights the link between social justice and the environment [(800) 235-8722].

**Speakers:** Church representatives from around the world regularly visit this country, and most returning American missionaries and Peace Corp volunteers welcome opportunities to share their experiences and suggest how a parish might help. To identify speakers in your area, contact your diocesan director for social action, justice and peace, or Catholic Relief Services.

## **ADVOCACY**

Many policy decisions made by the U.S. Congress and State Department have important environmental consequences in other nations. Through Catholic advocacy efforts, especially local legislative networks, we can play an important role in shaping U.S. policy. We can support sustainable

development programs in the U.S. foreign aid budget, we can support treaties and legislation that protect the environment and promote corporate responsibility, and we can support legislation establishing codes of conduct for U.S. business. (See pages 18-19 for more information on these policies.)

### **Legislative Network:**

Your diocese may have an organized legislative network that involves people from parishes throughout the diocese. If so, the diocese probably distributes "action alerts" on a variety of issues, including environmental justice. To find out about a diocesan legislative network, contact your diocesan director for social action, justice and peace, or Catholic Charities.

### **USCC Department of Social Development and World Peace:**

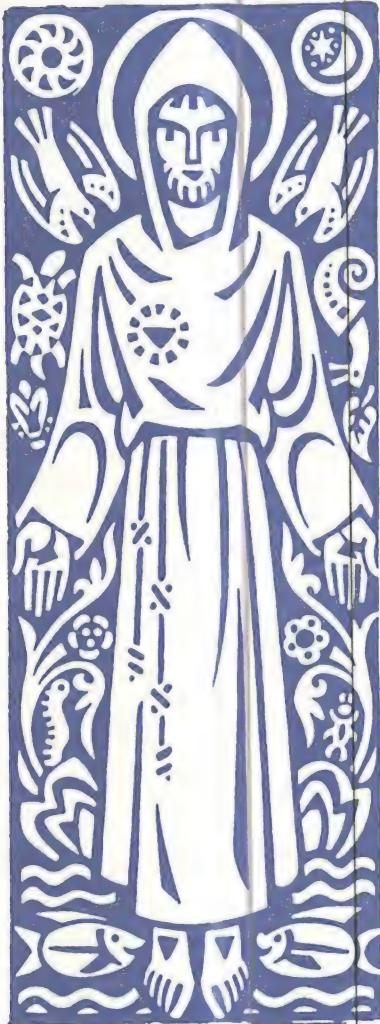
The Social Development and World Peace Department of the United States Catholic Conference produces a bimonthly mailing as well as special "action alerts" on a range of peace and justice issues, including international environmental and development concerns [Subscription: \$30/year; (202) 541-3191].

**Bread for the World:** Bread for the World's global hunger advocacy materials relate directly to environmental and health conditions around the world. The materials are designed to make it easy for parishes to participate in the "Offering of Letters" and other advocacy efforts throughout the year [(301) 608-2400].

**Amnesty International, USA:** "Voices for Freedom, an Interfaith Partnership for Human Rights" provides parish tools to create a letter-writing advocacy program addressing global human rights concerns [(212) 633-4256].

# Parish Clip Art

Use the art on this page in bulletins, newsletters, and other printed materials. Just photocopy, paste up, and reproduce along with your own copy.



# Bulletin Quotes from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

**P**lease feel free to use in your parish bulletin the following quotes from the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. All quotes must include the following permission line:

Excerpts from the English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America Copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.,—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

... our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God's works. (no. 198)

Creation is the foundation of “all God's saving plans,” the “beginning of the history of salvation” that culminates in Christ. (no. 280)

Creation is the common work of the Holy Trinity. (no. 292)

“The world was made for the glory of God.” St. Bonaventure explains that God created all things “not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it.” (no. 293)

Because creation comes forth from God's goodness, it shares in that goodness—“And God saw that it was good . . . very good.” (no. 299)

Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. (no. 2415)

*There is a solidarity among all creatures arising from the fact that all have the same Creator and are all ordered to his glory.* (no. 344)

Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created “in a state of journeying” (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained, to which God has destined it. (no. 302)

Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment. (no. 339)

God speaks to man through the visible creation. The material cosmos is so presented to man's intelligence that he can read there traces of its Creator. Light and darkness, wind and fire, water and earth, the tree and its fruit speak of God and symbolize both his greatness and his nearness. (no. 1147)

Political authority has the right and duty to regulate the legitimate exercise of the right to ownership for the sake of the common good. (no. 2406)

The right to private property, acquired by work or received from others by inheritance or gift, does not do away with the original gift of the earth to the whole of mankind. The universal destination of goods remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise. (no. 2403)

**Those responsible for business enterprises are responsible to society for the economic and ecological effects of their operations.** (no. 2432)

“In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself.” The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, . . . (no. 2404)

**Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor.** (no. 2405)

Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation. (no. 2415)

# The USCC Environmental Justice Small Grants Program

To encourage local initiatives, the Environmental Justice Program has an Environmental Justice Small Grants Program offering one-year grants ranging from \$500 to \$1,500 for support of new diocesan and parish initiatives that can serve as model projects for other parishes, dioceses, and diocesan Catholic organizations.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for a small grant, a project must satisfy the following criteria:

1. It must be undertaken under the auspices of a Catholic parish, diocese, or organization and must be approved by the pastor or bishop;
2. It should undertake a new and creative initiative in seeking to share—and give substance to—the message of *Renewing the Earth*; and
3. It should lend itself to replication or adaptation in other parishes, dioceses, and diocesan Catholic organizations.

Proposals should endeavor to integrate environmental justice concerns with social justice activities.

Eligibility does not guarantee funding since resources are limited. The review committee will seek to have demonstration projects represent education, advocacy, communications, international issues, and other areas. The review committee will also seek to reflect the diversity of dioceses in size, geography, and other factors. Applications will be reviewed for creativity and potential impact on significant numbers of people.

Grants will cover a one-year time period. Applications can be obtained

from the diocesan Social Action Director or from the Environmental Justice Program office in the fall. Deadline for applications is January 1 of the following year. Announcement of awards is made in March.

Additional questions regarding the Small Grants Program should be directed to:

Jill Ortman-Fouse  
USCC  
Environmental Justice Small  
Grants Program  
3211 Fourth Street NE  
Washington DC 20017  
(202) 541-3160.

## 1996 SMALL GRANT WINNERS

The USCC Environmental Justice Program has awarded seventy grants over the past three years. The following are a few of the twenty-five projects funded in 1996.

### Environmental Responsibility

\$1,500  
*Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota*

The project will implement a plan of environmental responsibility in the parishes, parochial schools, and all religious education programs throughout the diocese. This will include auditing present environmental problems and needs, addressing safe waste disposal, and conserving natural resources. Results will be sent to all parishes in the diocese for follow-up.

### Come to the Water

\$1,500  
*Diocese of Kansas City, Kansas*  
Representatives from each of eleven regions and three reservations will participate in a one-day conference (with prayer service, scientific reports, panel



presentations, and discussions) on water quality in the area. The teaching of the bishops' documents will be applied specifically to the issue, and formulation of a project, with follow-up and report, will result.

### **Mary Help of Christians**

**\$1,500**

*Archdiocese of Miami, Florida*

This project will produce brochures to instruct parishioners and pastors on acquiring land, designing church facilities, and undertaking ecologically sound building programs. The project will serve as a model for the archdiocese.

### **Franciscan Seculars EJEP**

**\$725**

*Diocese of Oakland, California*

This project will devote an issue of an existing environmental networking newsletter (*The Canticle of Creation*) to the theme of environmental justice. Free copies will be distributed to the 20,000 secular fraternities in the United States.

### **Greening of a College**

**\$1,500**

*Diocese of Ogdensburg, New York*

The goal of this project is to raise the environmental consciousness of the college's students, faculty, and administrators. This will be achieved through a research audit, academic programs, and plans for resource use—on a university-wide basis—that reflect a reverence for creation in all its forms.

### **Farming/Leadership Project**

**\$1,500**

*Diocese of Seattle, Washington*

This project seeks to use agricultural land in King County for farming by low-income residents. The farming will be conducted in a manner that



*The community gardening project at St. James Cathedral in Seattle, Washington, supports local farmers and food networking.*

preserves and protects the land's ecological balance. This includes using feasibility studies, training farmers/leaders, organizing cooperatives, and implementing up-to-date organic methods.

### **Loretto Nature Classroom**

**\$1,500**

*Diocese of St. Augustine, Florida*

This project will create a "nature classroom" for elementary school students to develop an appreciation for the connection between humans and their life-supporting environment. It will include both classroom and field plant identification, plant dying and weaving, creating an herbarium, training instructors, and developing lesson plans and a training video for the twenty-five participating teachers.

### **Wildscaping**

**\$1,442**

*Diocese of Superior, Wisconsin*

The Servite Center for Life will demonstrate how to lower home maintenance costs, reduce smog and noise pollution, and protect biodiversity by

converting 7,000 square feet of lawn to wild flowers and prairie grasses.

### **Worm-Works**

**\$1,400**

*Diocese of Toledo, Ohio*

Vermiculture (worm-composting) will be introduced into the schools and used to grow vegetables for transplanting to gardens that support food and hunger programs. This project is a hands-on learning opportunity for the children to change a culture of waste into a culture of life.

### **Stewardship: Caring for God's Creation**

**\$1,500**

*Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana*

This project sponsored a four-page insert on environmental issues and stewardship in the Bayou Catholic newspaper, with a diocesan circulation of 20,000. This information will also be featured on the diocesan TV station.

### **Our Lady of Lourdes**

**\$500**

*Diocese of Yakima, Washington*

High school youth will develop and present theatrical skits to young children. The skits will address the problem of increasing community violence, both to the children themselves and to the physical environment, and will demonstrate that choices can have far-reaching and profound consequences.

**For a complete list of funded projects, contact:**

USCC Environment Justice Program  
3211 Fourth Street NE  
Washington DC 20017  
(202) 541-3160

# St. Francis Recognition of Model Parishes

## OUR GIFT TO YOU ...

We would like to honor and celebrate parishes who take seriously their responsibility as stewards of God's creation by recognizing them as a St. Francis Model Parish. We will present parishes who make the following covenant with a certificate that recognizes their commitment and features St. Francis's Canticle of the Sun. The certificate is signed by the bishops who chair the Domestic and International Policy Committees of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC).

In 1979, Pope John Paul II proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi the patron of those who promote ecology. He said that St. Francis "offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation. . . . May he remind us of our serious obligation to respect and watch over [creation] with care. . . ." As a St. Francis Model Parish, you will be committing to do your part as a parish to recognize the interdependence of the web of life. Our Holy Father has said, "more than ever, people—both individually and collectively—are responsible for the future of the planet." As a St. Francis Model Parish, your parish agrees to pray, educate, and act on behalf of the Lord's Earth. (See certificate illustration on reverse side.)

## OUR PARISH WILL COVENANT TO

- 1. Pray for social justice for the poor and vulnerable who suffer disproportionately from environmental destruction.
- 2. Pray for the unborn and children who are at risk from exposure to environmental hazards.
- 3. Celebrate with special liturgies or prayer services focused on God's creation (for example, on St. Francis Day, Rogation Days, and Earth Day).
- 4. Use the resources of the earth carefully by conducting environmental or energy audits of our grounds, recycling, composting, or gardening organically.
- 5. Educate our congregation or parish school by sponsoring or participating in classes and workshops on Catholic theology/spirituality and the environment, environmental study groups, lecture series, special curricula, or offering video or library resources.
- 6. Engage in youth activities like special liturgies, prayer services, wilderness experiences, and litter or environmental cleanups.
- 7. Promote or sponsor public policy activities such as letter writing campaigns, interfaith events, meetings with government representatives, and community events.
- 8. Advocate and organize around health issues, including toxic waste cleanup, elimination of harmful pesticides, soil and water conservation, lead poisoning prevention, sustainable development, and alternative energy sources.
- 9. Support financially or as volunteers the work of Catholic organizations like the National Council of Catholic Women, Catholic Relief Services, the Campaign for Human Development, and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference that promote care for the environment in the United States and abroad.
- 10. Examine our environmental responsibility in terms of issues particular to our community, whether our parish is urban, rural or suburban.
- 11. Other activities \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

PASTOR/PARISH LEADER \_\_\_\_\_

PARISH \_\_\_\_\_

PARISH ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

FAX NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

DIOCESE \_\_\_\_\_

When you return this form, we will recognize your parish as a St. Francis Model Parish. We will also put you on our mailing list to receive additional resources from the Environmental Justice Program. Thank you for your leadership in caring for God's creation.

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM

recognizes

[YOUR PARISH NAME HERE]

as a

ST. FRANCIS MODEL PARISH

*In celebration of your leadership in education and action  
on behalf of the Lord's earth, the United States bishops honor your  
commitment to environmental justice.*



MOST REV. THEODORE E. McCARRICK  
Chairman  
International Policy Committee



MOST REV. WILLIAM S. SKYLSTAD  
Chairman  
Domestic Policy Committee

Actual certificate is 8-1/2 x 11. See reverse for information.



CANTICLE  
OF THE  
SUN

O most High, almighty, good Lord God,  
to you be longed praise, glory, honor and all blessing!

Praised be my Lord with all creatures,  
and especially our brother the sun,  
which brings us the day and the light;  
tan is he, and shining with a very great splendour.  
O Lord, he signifies you to us!

Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon,  
the day and the night, which is the moon;  
which God has set clear and lovely to be even.

Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind,  
and for air and cloud, rains and all weather;  
which God has set clear and lovely to be even.

Praised be my Lord for our sister water,  
which is very serviceable to us,  
and humble, and precious, and clean.

Praise be my Lord for brother fire,  
which you give us to warm us in the darkness;  
and he is bright, and pleasant, and very radiant,  
and strong.

Praised be my Lord for our mother the Earth,  
which sustains us and keeps us,  
and yields diverse fruits, and flowers of  
many colors, and grace.

Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon  
one another for God's love's sake,  
and for those who for their labours,  
blessed are they who peacefully shall endure;  
for you, O most High, shall give them a crown!

Praised be my Lord for our sister, the death  
of the body, from which no one escapes,  
"We to him who died in mortal sin."

Blessed are they who are found walking  
by your most holy will,  
for the second death shall have no  
power to do them harm.

Praise you, and bless you the Lord  
and give thanks to God, and serve God  
with great humility.

(ST. FRANCIS, 1182-1226)

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM  
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3211 FOURTH STREET NE  
WASHINGTON DC 20017-5298

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UNITED STATES

# Index of Environmental Justice Parish Resources

Following is a list of the contents of the U.S. bishops' *Environmental Justice Program's Parish Resource Kits*. To obtain these and other environmental justice publications, please see the back cover.

## RENEWING THE FACE OF THE EARTH, A RESOURCE FOR PARISHES

*Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching* (November 14, 1991, U.S. Bishops' Statement)

Reflections on Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching  
The Earth Is the Lord's  
Stewards of Life, Stewards of Nature  
Education, Action, and Advocacy  
Environmental Justice

Suggestions for Prayer and Worship  
Prayer and Liturgy  
Liturgy: Creation as Sacrament  
Homily Helps

Recommendations for Moving Environmental Concerns into Parish Life

The Challenge of Environmental Problems

What You Can Do  
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## PEACE WITH GOD THE CREATOR, PEACE WITH ALL CREATION

Parish Committees and Prayers

Homily Helps: Preaching Environmental Justice

Articles

An Ecological Spirituality  
Naysayers and Doomsayers—  
How Do We Sort Out the Differences in the Ongoing Environmental Debate?  
Environmental Hazards and Children—Born and Unborn  
Environmental Justice—The New Definition of Environment  
The Good Life—From a Catholic Perspective: The Problem of Consumption

Our Partners in Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice Resources

Parish Clip Art

## LET THE EARTH BLESS THE LORD, GOD'S CREATION AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY

How to Use This Resource

How to Get Started

Celebrating the Past—Moving to the Future: Parish Models of Environmental Justice

Homily Help: Preaching God's Environment

Prayer Services For Use on Special Occasions

The International Connection:  
The Call to Solidarity and Global Environmental Stewardship

The Flourishing of the Human Family—Protecting the Environment: The Sustainable Development Model  
The Church in Latin America and the Ecological Question  
Refugees: A New Familiar Story  
Environment: Call to Respond  
Services and the

ions  
Make the Connection

1. Ecology--Religious aspects--Catholic Church. 2. Environmental ethics. 3. Environmental responsibility--Moral and ethical aspects. 4. Church and social problems--Catholic Church. I. United States Catholic Conference. II. Title: *Let the earth bless the Lord : ...* (Card 2) III. Title: *A Catholic approach to the environment.*

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# Additional Resources for Seeking Environmental Justice

## **"And God Saw That it Was Good"**

### **Catholic Theology and the Environment**

This dynamic reader is designed to help address the ecological crisis in light of Catholic tradition and teachings. Anne M. Clifford, CSJ; John F. Haught; David Toolan, SJ; Kevin W. Irwin; Drew Christiansen, SJ; and others contributed to this compilation of conference papers. The volume includes articles on Scripture, liturgy, and ethics as well as the full text of related documents by Pope John Paul II; the U.S. bishops; the Australian, Dominican, Guatemalan, and Philippine episcopal conferences; and the Catholic bishops of Northern Italy. Edited by Drew Christiansen, SJ, and Walter Grazer. 1996.

**NO. 5-089, 363 PP.**

### **Renewing the Earth**

The U.S. bishops call on Catholics to reflect on and to discuss environmental problems, including global warming; depletion of the ozone layer; deforestation; and toxic and nuclear waste. 1992.

**NO. 468-6, 20 PP.**

### **Renewing the Face of the Earth:**

#### **A Resource for Parishes**

Today's global environmental crisis makes justice for the environment inseparable from justice for the poor. Includes the bishops' statement, *Renewing the Earth*; suggestions for initiating parish programs; liturgical, homily, and prayer helps; background information on the connection between the environment and social justice; parish bulletin inserts; resource information. From the U.S. bishops' Department of Social Development and World Peace, 1994.

**NO. 766-9, 80 PP.**

To order these resources or to obtain a catalog of other USCC titles, call toll-free 1-800-235-8722. In the Washington metropolitan area or from outside the United States, call (301) 209-9020.



**Publication No. 5-085**  
**United States Catholic Conference**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**ISBN 1-57455-085-3**

### **Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation**

A parish resource kit for environmental justice implementation. Provides models for parish involvement and action on environmental justice issues. Includes activities for parishioner participation, homily helps, articles on conservation, and the St. Francis Prayer Card. From the U.S. bishops' Department of Social Development and World Peace, 1995.

**NO. 032-X, 53 PP.**

### **Peace with God the Creator,**

#### **Peace with All Creation: St. Francis Prayer Card**

Our special St. Francis Prayer Card with the Canticle of the Sun on the back serves as a gentle reminder of our responsibility within creation and our duty toward nature and the Creator which are an essential part of our faith. Order bulk copies to distribute to parish committee members while planning parish activities.

**NO. 5-024**

### **The Ecological Crisis:**

#### **A Common Responsibility**

Pope John Paul II's 1990 World Day of Peace message. The Holy Father voices his concern for the environment and calls for all citizens of the earth to respect life and seek a solution to this crisis through solidarity and shared responsibility for the world.

**NO. 332-9, 16 PP.**

### **The Earth Is the Lord's**

A 13-minute video presentation on environmental concerns that complements *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation*. Comes with discussion guide. Use for parish program on environmental justice. 1995.

**NO. 058-3, 13 MINUTES**

ISBN 1-57455-085-3



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